

At the crossroads of information and culture

The 64th IFLA Conference

by Hannelore B. Rader

The 64th IFLA Conference was held in Amsterdam, Netherlands, from August 14–21, 1998. The theme, "At the Crossroads of Information and Culture," was of particular interest to the 3,328 international participants from 120 countries since library professionals throughout the world are standing at the crossroads of information, libraries, networks, and technology and they need to decide how to prepare for the next century.

IFLA's Section for University Libraries and General Research Libraries, comprised of over 450 international members, sponsored three programs:

One program covered performance measures and cost analysis based on academic libraries in Germany and South Africa.

- A survey on performance measures in academic libraries was discussed by John Willemse, library director at the University of South Africa. The survey was sent to selected academic libraries in various countries with a 20 percent response.

Preliminary findings indicate that few academic libraries are working with performance measures, and those that do utilize these measures are at still the beginning stages of such work.

- Cost studies projects in German academic libraries were described by Roswitha Poll, library director at the University of Muenster in Germany. The German govern-

ment mandates cost-analysis data for higher education including academic libraries. For several years data on cost accounting has been collected and now comments are needed. Poll will be sending a document for comments to various members of the section this year. At the end of the academic year, German universities will combine cost data and performance measures to assess outcomes.

Speakers from Turkey, Finland, and the United States addressed the section's program on "Integrating Information Skills into a Changing Curriculum." Several hundred international librarians attended the session, which covered the following topics:

- In the "Faculty-librarian collaboration in building the curriculum for the millennium: The U.S. experience" presentation, I provided an overview of the U.S. situation in terms of changes in higher education and curricula and related it to academic libraries. I also discussed current opportunities for academic librarians to become partners in rethinking curriculum development and teaching.

- "Information seeking need and information seeking in a Turkish university" was discussed by Nazan O. Ucak and S. Serap Kurbanoglu from Hacettepe University in Ankara Turkey. Their studies of researchers' information-seeking behavior and information needs indicate that such needs and behavior vary from discipline to discipline and that

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such factors must be considered when designing services and user instruction.

• "Information skills within the framework of problem-oriented studies in Finland" was presented by Teodora Oker-Blom from the Veterinary Medicine Library at the University of Helsinki in Finland. In a recent study in Finland, it was found that a much lower percentage of faculty than in the United States had been taught information skills. It was also found that faculty in general want information skills training and courses. The speaker discussed new methods in medical education, such as problem-based learning and how librarians can work with faculty to integrate information skills into such teaching.

"How do libraries respond to the change in focus from teaching and learning?" was another workshop sponsored by the section.

• Paulette Bernhard from the University of Montreal, Canada, discussed the use of the Web for information literacy instruction. She showed many examples of such instruction in Canada and the United States and discussed their values and problems.

• Peter Clayton, professor of Communication from the University of Canberra, Australia, reported on the first-ever nationwide quantitative survey of academic staff use of the Internet and implications for libraries. (The full report of this study will be published in 1998 entitled "Academics Online" by Auslib Press in Adelaide, Australia.) Discussions ensued on how to change from teaching to learning in the information age by using course teams, resource-based and problem-solving learning, and concentrating on lifelong learning skills for students.

In summary, the University and General Research Libraries Section addressed very important and current issues in higher education and academic libraries within an international setting. It must be noted that the cultural and educational differences in each country provide special significance to these presentations. Some of the papers and program information

can be located at <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/ifla/IV/ifla64/64intro.htm>.

The opening of the IFLA conference was presided over by Catherine Deschamps, the new president of IFLA with Ruud Grondel, deputy mayor and alderman of Amsterdam and Rick van der Ploeg, state secretary of education. They were assisted by the Dutch IFLA Organizing Committee.

Two special guest lectures added to the excitement of this year's IFLA Conference. Herman Libaers, honorary president of IFLA talked about the IFLA Conference 30 years ago, and the Algerian journalist Ahmed Ancer spoke about freedom of access to information and freedom of expression.

Twenty poster sessions ranging from topics



This is a view of the "New Church" in Amsterdam, which has the book exhibit "Alphabet Soup."

on Swedish dyslexia summer camps to preservation, and from Library and Information science in Thailand to Friends of the Alexandria Library.

The U.S. delegation of 252 was the largest group from one country. Many international librarians from the five continents came to the booth to let us know how

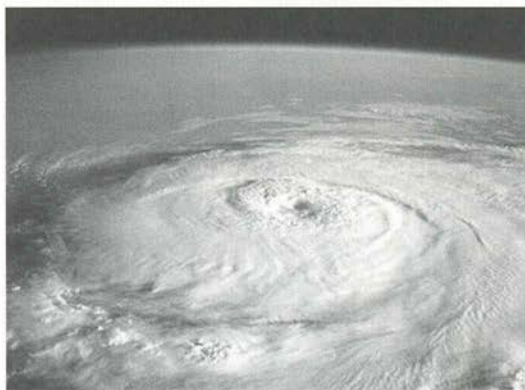
much they appreciate support and help from U.S. libraries and librarians. Thanks to grants from the Dutch Ministry of Development Aid, 40 librarians from 35 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe were able to attend the IFLA conference, several of them for the first time.

The many museums and cultural events make Amsterdam a versatile and stimulating place to visit. Particularly noteworthy was the new book and manuscript exhibit organized by the Royal Library in the Hague to commemorate its 200th anniversary. It was located in a church, organized creatively within the alphabet and appropriately called "the Wonderful Alphabet." Another memorable visit was to the Anne Frank House, a very emotional and historical occasion for visitors to Amsterdam.

IFLA in Amsterdam was indeed a valuable and educational experience. Some of us hope that we will be able to provide an equally valuable IFLA Conference in 2001 in Boston. ■

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