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**PROMOTION OF THE CHILDREN'S GUIDELINES:  
Introducing the Guidelines for Children's Libraries Services: the Presentation of the first English edition and the Spanish translation**

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It is just another day at the local library.....

*"Let's compare a typical school day in the life of a child in Spain with the school day of a child in China with a school day in Nigeria."* This was a project idea after a group of fourth graders visited the public library for a program on "Life in an American One-room Schoolhouse".

Jonathan visited the library daily to e-mail his dad who was on a business trip in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. He also e-mailed his grandparents who were missionaries in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, Central America.

Sarah used the library to research the country of origin for the foods on the menu served at the International Dinner held at her church and provided by students from the nearby college.

Using travel books, the History of Education textbooks, free access to the Internet, cookbooks and websites on foods and markets around the world, all of these

reference queries could be answered by the public library staff. And these examples are from a typical day. The world of information available to our children is vast and literally at their fingertips as global connectivity forms a network of communication options – complete with translation capability. Our youngsters no longer memorize the names of the continents of the world to show-off their geography skills. They have world maps in their classrooms highlighting the various countries in which they have e-mail pen pals!

It is a very different world from even a decade ago for our children. And thanks to the continued efforts of the public libraries of the world, our young people are aware of ways to meet their information needs, to have access to reliable communication tools and to begin to make their mark in our global community.

In 1991, the Section of Children’s Libraries, published Guidelines for Children’s Services edited by Adele M. Fasick, who was serving as chair of the Section at that time. This 42 page booklet served as a supplement to IFLA’s Guidelines for Public Libraries, published in 1986. Written to address the many aspects of children’s library work, the over-arching goal was “to offer to children access to the knowledge and culture of the society in which he or she is growing up.” (Guidelines for Children’s Services, Fasick, p. 1). This document was successfully written by committee, assigning chapters to international contributors, with the content managed by the editor.

In 1999, the Section on Library Service to Children and Young Adults reviewed the 1991 document and decided it was time to revise and update that publication. The completion date would be early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And “a document done by committee” seemed a reasonable approach – at the time. Initiatives to be emphasized included:

- \*encouragement of literacy
- \*encouragement to support changing technologies
- \*emphasis on “free” access to all materials for children and young adults
- \*recognition of the reality of the overwhelming use of the Internet by kids
- \*and the need to develop social literacy – the connection for kids with other kids, especially kids in cultures from around the world.

The work began...

Committee members selected chapters from the 1991 document to update and suggested new chapters to be included. Everyone wrote page after page – good information, very detailed and very much a reflection of each author’s own workplace – or their idealized workplace!

As the reams of paper rolled in – the sheer volume of prose convinced the committee it would be an outrageous expense to produce such a tome! The “detailed descriptions” sounded like mandates and soon alerted the committee to the lack of encouraging and realistic guidance included for poorer, very rural libraries, and in particular, libraries in developing countries.

The group really wanted the Guidelines to set forth a philosophical strategy, with the step-by-step development and implementation being each individual library's responsibility.

With the publication of the Guidelines for Library Services for Young Adults in an outline format, the committee saw another approach – and perhaps one that was a bit more user friendly (and less expensive to produce).

Convinced we had many important things to say, and seeing an outline approach as being too brief, the committee persevered and left the Section chairman to try to edit all the “chapters”. The edited document would be presented for discussion at an “invited meeting” for members of other sections in order to get their consent – all to be done at the Glasgow conference. That 2002 draft was still a hefty document and some sections were still incomplete.

It was in Glasgow that the committee admitted a shorter text with “bullets” to capture the most important points, would work. Now a final document for the Berlin conference became the goal.

In Berlin the document's chapters had been rearranged to complement the Public Library Guidelines structure. Another draft rearranged and manipulated the information in accordance with The Young Adult Guidelines. The committee was determined, but a bit worn down by now. No amount of editing seemed to be moving the project forward.

It was either “pull something together, right now, or pull out of the publication.” Too much time and money had been invested and committed at this point to “give up”! Determined members of the committee volunteered to use the document as it stood and glean the “main ideas” and prepare a completely new document, pretty much as it is being introduced to you today. This final document would never have been possible without the excellent thoughts and examples cited by the committee members. They captured the essence of “the importance of excellent library service for children possible through the efforts of the public library”.

This feels as if the committee has “birthed a baby”. And this is no ordinary baby as the gestation period rivals that of the Indian elephant which is 22 months. For us – our four years of work amounts to birthing two baby elephants! The feeling of relief “off our shoulders” at having completed the Guidelines, is at least the weight of two elephants!

With all the decisions behind us, the committee presents with pride, the final document, Guidelines for Children's Libraries Services. While looking back, the major goal has been achieved. The new Guidelines are to be seen as an implementation “tool” rather than the definitive word, in establishing and maintaining children's libraries.

One of the first statements again emphasizes the “rights of every child”. This is essential before anything else can happen in assisting a country to establish essential and meaningful children's libraries.

The goals seem simply stated, but they possess an “energy” reflective of the IFLA spirit.

This document states boldly and clearly:

- the need to invest in children's libraries;
- the opportunity for the library to serve as the introduction to the global community for
- children and families.
- the continued importance of involvement and cooperation between the library and numerous other institutions within the community
- the need for ongoing, worthwhile training for those who work with children
- the vital need for children's services staff to be part of the management team of the library
- the importance of regular evaluation of all that is part of library service to children and young adults.

May these Guidelines be broadly stated so countries of every size and economic level will recognize the value of excellent children's libraries and devote resources to see that the Guidelines are adopted and implemented. The Committee owes its sense of satisfaction to those who have chaired the Committee through the years. A salute to John Dunne, from the United Kingdom, Elisabeth Lundgren from Sweden and Ivanka Stricevic from Croatia for their confidence and unfailing loyalty. They caused us "to rise to the occasion".

It might not surprise you to know, the committee never really gave up on some of the "details" which had been imbedded in their original "chapters". So the compromise is to offer and request "Best Practice" contributions from committee members, Section members and all of our colleagues. The form is available through the Libraries for Children and Young Adults IFLA Section. The completed forms will be posted on IFLANET under the entry "Guidelines for Children's Library Services". A text of 150 words or 800 characters, describing a "best practice" or something which falls into the category of "What's New In Our Children's Library", can be submitted along with one photo. You are all encouraged to take advantage of this service of the IFLANET.

Before sharing some "best practices" already submitted, and opening the floor to questions about the creation and direction of the GUIDELINES, let me review some of the "language" of the GUIDELINES.

Terms from the GUIDELINES which may need further definition:

- *Free and open access to information*  
This means unobstructed use of all formats to information
- *Growing up is a local activity, ...but one affected by global issues*  
This acknowledges the responsibility of the parents, immediate and extended family and the community to "raise a child", but asks all involved to remember that so much of what we teach our children and what they must learn, revolves around being a member of the "world" community and adjusting to the influences that world may have on each person's life.

- *To facilitate families' entry in the community*  
This means introducing and accepting all members of a family new to the community.
- *Developmentally appropriate materials*  
This means there are expected skills acquired and mastered by children within specific age ranges.
- *Non-threatening place to visit*  
This means the library is welcoming, calm, comfortable and allows coming and going at an individual's leisure
- *Caregivers*  
This term is applied to a person, other than the parent or immediate family, who attends to the needs of a child.
- *Planning process*  
This refers to the systematic set of actions developed for a library to carry out its role.
- *Standardized competencies*  
This refers to statements of measurement to define qualifications and abilities

Thank you for your attention.  
Now to your comments and questions.

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