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IFLA President's Report

Kay Raseroka
President of IFLA

Dear members of IFLA,

I would like to begin this presidential report by referring to my initial commitment as a candidate for IFLA's presidency. My main pledge was to facilitate communication between different library and information worlds. This means to build on global communication that unites the electronic information rich with the oral information rich. I want to see the two worlds complement one another in creating an information rich society regardless of medium of transmission.

I also promised to uphold IFLA's core values and to support the members, striving to apply these in practice. These core values are our 'red thread' for all our activities as IFLA:

- freedom of access to information, and freedom of expression
- universal and equitable access to information, ideas and works of imagination for the social, cultural, democratic and economic well being of all people

- high quality library and information services
- IFLA activities should be accessible for all, applying the principle of non-discrimination.

1. IFLA is changing

The main focus of this presidency has been to facilitate change of IFLA, based on the outcome of consultations with members. This consultative process started with the brainstorming session in 2002 and has continued electronically as well as in various national and regional association conferences which I was fortunate to engage in. In addition, members' views were sought, on the paper A Green Light for IFLA.

The outcomes of these consultations reinforced the following prioritised areas of activity:

- Advocacy
- Partnerships and Alliances
- Continuing Professional Development.

Furthermore, members stressed the responsibility to identify and recognize diversity within the communities served by IFLA's libraries. They also asked for more programmatic coherence of IFLA activities. Last but not least, there was recognition that IFLA has an urgent need to diversify revenue streams and consolidate human resources to meet increased expectations of members.

This clearly pointed the way in which members wish to change IFLA, and upon which we embarked.

Well, some of IFLA's changes were not foreseen. We did not expect to work as a president with three secretaries-general, but it happened. It has caused delays in our planning process, but also made clearer than ever before, that the IFLA administrative structure is exceptionally under-resourced.

As IFLA members we were galvanised into a quick response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami disaster. The empathy of IFLA members has laid a foundation for action under similar situations.

We acknowledge that the strength of IFLA is its members: colleagues and IFLA staff who sustain programmatic and administrative activities in various parts of the globe. I applaud the generous contributions of these dedicated professionals. Please join me in the expression of our gratitude and applause.

2. Achievements

The Governing Board has approved a more focused presentation of IFLA, based on three pillars: Society, Profession and Members. This new model for IFLA's operations, recognises that IFLA's core functions relate to the societal contexts in which libraries and information services operate, IFLA's membership and professional matters. These three pillars are supported by the infrastructure offered by IFLA HQ, IFLANET and the Federation's governance structures.

IFLA's Three Pillars



- Libraries and information services serve society by preserving memory, feeding development, enabling education & research, and supporting international understanding & community well being.

[On the slide: The Society Pillar focuses on the role and impact of libraries and information services in society and the contextual issues that condition and constrain the environment in which they operate across the world. Those issues are addressed currently through [FAIFE](#), [CLM](#), [Blue Shield](#), and our advocacy in the [World Summit on the Information Society \(WSIS\)](#) and other arenas. We need to place particular emphasis on the World Summit on the Information Society in which IFLA has invested so much and to such good effect. We must capitalise on that investment and those results so that we take full advantage of this second phase leading up to the November 2005 summit meeting in Tunis and to the achieve the longer term goals.

The Profession Pillar focuses on the issues covered by the long established Core Activities - [ALP](#), [ICABS](#), [PAC](#), [UNIMARC](#) - and

the [Sections](#) and [Divisions](#). They lie at the core of our professional practice and help libraries and information services to fulfil their purposes and to shape responses to the needs of clients in a rapidly changing global environment.

The Members Pillar is of course central to IFLA. It includes the services we offer to members, management of their membership of IFLA, conferences and publications. We must work together to make IFLA more vibrant and attractive and beneficial for members throughout the world.]

The three pillars and the underlying infrastructure are interdependent and not mutually exclusive. They offer a way of understanding and presenting IFLA holistically to the library and information sector and to governments and the wider community. The pillars also provide the framework for IFLA's management and their focus will be reflected in program based budgeting.

The Management of Library Associations Section (MLA) has been drawn closer to IFLA's objectives and strategies. In acknowledgement of this fact, a representative of the MLA section was appointed as a member of the Governing Board.

MLA's valuable expertise that contributed to the creation of a more equitable fee structure, is highly appreciated. We also recognise that the statutes should be revisited to reposition MLA, in IFLA's reorientation towards global advocacy.

The Governing Board acknowledges and accepts in principle that the IFLA's core activities are central to the IFLA structure, both in terms of human resources and financial investment.

However, the necessary allocation of finance for sustained support of core activities through IFLA budgets is dependent on IFLA's willingness to develop a priority based program budgeting system.

We see an increase in active involvement of more members in the congress. Sections cooperate, even across divisions, to prepare interesting programmes. However, there is need for more programmatic interaction. New professionals have raised their voice during the brainstorming sessions, and have now formed a discussion group and found a shelter within the MLA section. The high speed with which this was achieved, demonstrates that decisions in IFLA's bureaucracy can be implemented fast, if professionals so wish.

3. Advocacy

IFLA concluded that worldwide advocacy for libraries is what distinguishes IFLA from any national library association. IFLA is the only one that can do this. Global advocacy means that IFLA, as a federation of library associations, works first and foremost with and through the national library associations. That means that IFLA should work with active participating members, and have a good strategy and communication between the national, regional and the international levels on library advocacy. on common advocacy issues.

Advocacy in Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Freedom of access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) contrives to demand our attention and resources.

The most successful activities in this area of advocacy have been in the world summit on the information society (WSIS). We presented ourselves well at the summit in Geneva in 2003. It was a first step, that provided us with many learning experiences and forged invaluable team work, based on extensive support of library associations, institutional members and individual commitment to volunteerism. The sustained support, particularly of the Swiss colleagues, is warmly acknowledged. However, for future advocacy activities we will need to organise extensive resources (the WSIS 2003 cost an estimated 200,000 Euros).

We need to create international groups and manage knowledge as a means to monitor the global issues continuously. We need to cooperate with national library associations in the countries where international summits take place.

4. Professional development

The core values have been vivified: they form a shared framework of operation. They are made visible in our statements and programmes. But that it is time to ACT.

The challenge for us librarians is to stretch our frames of reference to creatively and imaginatively exploit all aspects of ICT for the benefit of humanity. We should be conscious of the fact that many, many people, all over the world, have no opportunity to make use of or benefit from the written word.

To achieve this goal, attention must be focussed on developing and maintaining lifelong information literacy, in its broadest sense, not only among information users, but also among librarians and other information workers.

In this way Libraries for Lifelong literacy has been put on the agenda for all IFLA units.

The presidential theme was further developed by a task force chaired by Cristóbal Pasadas, entitled the Presidential committee for Life Long Literacies. The committee expects to complete its work by the end of September.

The theme has been discussed at various fora, such as UNESCO's Information Literacy Forum and in Alexandria in partnership with the U.S. National Forum on Information Literacy, UNESCO and IFLA.

By putting lifelong literacy on the world agenda of library associations and IFLA members, it has become easier for colleagues in developing countries to discuss these matters, in relation to development of local content in local languages through multimodal text.

Personally I had the opportunity to address a number of audiences ranging from scholars in African studies to library students, and participants at the World Social Forum.

The theme has also helped to promote a deeper understanding of literacy in many parts of the world and look beyond mere information literacy, which seems so closely related to ICT skills, forgetting about the critical faculties which are necessary for citizens in an information society.

Some issues, related to world problems, have been brought closer to the international library community, acknowledging that information and information services play a large role in these issues. One of them is sustainable development. IFLA members were present at the Summit in Johannesburg, but our advocacy was not yet well developed.

The issue of HIV/AIDS continues to challenge us all as it has strong links to lack of access to information and poverty.

A third issue addresses the role of indigenous knowledge systems and oral cultures. Application of intellectual property rights in these cases demands creative solutions from all of us through the CLM core activities. Fundamentally, local communities should have access to their own sources of knowledge, and have them protected. ICT could be helpful, on condition that the local communities themselves have a say in its applications and are able to benefit from them. Contacts have been made with speakers who explained the implications of valuing indigenous knowledge systems on equal basis as printed

sources. But we haven't come very far in legal protection of these sources.

5. Partnerships

The true understanding that a library cannot on its own achieve good community service, and therefore has to look for partnerships, is also true for library associations, even more so at the international level. We have identified organisations which have a consultative status within IFLA, and the reverse, where IFLA has a consultative status, e.g. in the ECOSOC of the United Nations.

We have made progress in partnerships with publishers (IPA), and with organisations to protect cultural heritage, the Blue Shield.

We have successfully reached agreement on the principles of partnerships with the International Reading Association and the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY).

At the same time, we have to face the reality that our human resources to follow up on first contacts are limited.

Efforts were made to reach out to other important partners at the international level, such as UNICEF. UNICEF, however, operates in a structure that works mainly through its national committees. So here is another task for national library associations, to make the necessary connections. In this way we can influence UNICEF programmes to enhance their support for children's rights to information, literacy education through collaborative activities with libraries and community resource centres.

Another effort to achieve global access was to partner with Telecenters as a means of starting community based services. Contacts in Geneva at the WSIS resulted in a joint seminar during our Buenos Aires congress. But further involvement of IFLA members is needed to make it a fruitful partnership.

A special partnership could grow out of the contacts with e.g. African researchers, who are all over the world. Together with specialised librarians, they could help, to give access to local content and community sources which are unknown by the local communities themselves.

Summing up

Summing up this presidency leaves some doubts about what has been achieved and what could be achieved in these circumstances. It is clear that we have not yet resolved our financial situation. We have recruited help in various ways to find funds, but more is necessary.

For my part, another worry is still the lack of continuity in IFLA. The development of the position of President Elect has ensured that there is continuity in the presidency. However, there are still problems of continuity in committees and the governing board. This is an issue that needs to be addressed when IFLA revisits the current statutes.

Acknowledgments

I had the opportunity for address members of IFLA in many countries in the five continents. I thank, most sincerely, the various host library associations and institutions that supported and welcomed me on these visits.

I would like to acknowledge and pay a special tribute to the Nordic Library Associations whose continuing financial support made it possible for me to fulfil my responsibilities as IFLA president.

As a sort of testament

We should all work to strengthen our Federation. We need to build the resources to undertake fully the priorities which IFLA members have signalled, especially a strong advocacy program, flourishing professional activities, valued membership benefits and an effective infrastructure. All members need to join with IFLA staff and elected leaders to help secure the required financial strength which will allow us to achieve these goals. All need to promote IFLA and its priorities.

Recommends:

- to work for a strategic plan
- to consolidate the expertise within the association
- to involve more IFLA members in IFLA advocacy and professional development

I'm confident that the coming presidents, Alex Byrne and Claudia Lux will follow up and continue the route of changing IFLA already taken.

To you as members, I would like to say:

'Take care of IFLA'. There is still a lot to be done. It is in your hands.