

Thoughts about IFLA's Future

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All memorable dates arouse a natural desire to sum up what has been done, to assess the present and look towards the future. It goes without saying that the 50th anniversary of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions is an opportune occasion for such meditation.

One of IFLA's objectives as formulated in the new Statutes is the promotion of international mutual understanding amongst librarians. It is profoundly in tune with the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, held in Helsinki on 30 July–1 August 1975, and outlines prospects for the development of the Federation. We believe that this activity should be pushed further.

We would like IFLA, as one of the principal non-governmental organizations, embracing librarians from a hundred countries, to use books and libraries more actively for the cause of developing cultural and scientific exchanges between peoples and states.

This kind of initiatives should become an important part of IFLA's activities. It was at the General Council meetings of Moscow (1970) and Budapest (1972) that the need of augmenting the social role of books and libraries in modern society was first proclaimed, and the foundations for this action laid.

As a professional organization IFLA enjoys great prestige with librarians the world over. It is a good forum for a broad exchange of views on all questions of librarianship and library science. In order to make the exchange of experience even more effective and develop more fruitful relationships among library associations of different countries, it would be reasonable, in the opinion of the Soviet Library Association, to concentrate the efforts of all IFLA members on raising the scientific level of the Federation's work.

The exchange of experience will be really useful, provided it is based on serious analysis and well-founded conclusions. It is precisely for this reason that the theoretical aspects of library science, methodology and methods of research, and the application of completed studies are assuming special significance.

Soviet librarians take a great interest in the development of long-term research programmes with clearly defined goals, to promote the exchange of information in the field of science and culture. Such programmes should be equally useful for librarians in all countries irrespective of the level of their economic, social and cultural development.

We think that the programme of Universal Bibliographic Control is such an effort. It should be pointed out that the establishment and improvement of national bibliographies of current printed matter is but the first stage of the UBC programme.

Its framework will be expanded in the future to cover all problems of national and international systems of bibliographic control, including retrospective repertoires of publications. More attention should be given to the registration of all other information carriers, now not quite properly termed "non-book materials".

Standardization is another very promising field of IFLA activities. Nowadays it seems to be generally agreed that effective international library cooperation is impossible without a certain level of standardization and unification. The entire UBC programme is based on international standards of bibliographic description. Common development of standards in the broadest sense also establishes the foundation for the expansion and intensification of library cooperation in the future. If this work is well organized within IFLA, close coordination with other international organizations, and above all, with the International Organization for Standardization, will help solve many problems without additional expenditure.

Where scientific and technological progress has reached a suitable level, the development of national bibliographies and UBC, standardization, and the improvement of most other library and bibliographic processes are inconceivable without mechanization and automation. These include the application of the latest achievements of science and technology, and particularly, computers. Much is being done in this field within IFLA. However, a great deal more remains to be done, since unification and standardization are the main preconditions for the development of automation of various branches of library work.

Mention could be made here of other programmes in which IFLA can play an important organizational role, but lack of space prevents this.

I should like to dwell on some other problems on the solving of which IFLA's future depends. There is no need to increase the number of permanent IFLA offices or the number of IFLA staff and thus replace the activity of librarians by that of paid officials. Besides, such a trend will inevitably lead to considerable additional expense. Any unwarranted attempt to secure a higher budget for the Federation (e.g. by increasing membership dues or by introducing additional registration fees for joining sections) are bound to alienate from IFLA library associations in many countries.

During the 50 years of its existence IFLA has grown into an international public organization, and its future is that of such an organization rather than of an administrative or commercial centre.

There is another significant point. I believe we should all be permanently concerned with the improvement of IFLA's organizational structure, seeking to make it work more flexibly. Good prospects for this activity are opened up by the new Statutes adopted in Lausanne in 1976.

For instance, the expansion of the Federation's scientific activities will be facilitated by attracting to its various bodies the largest possible number of librarians from different countries. Fruitful cooperation could thus be established, not only at the meetings of the Council, the Professional Board, the Executive Board

and the Sections, but also, by means of correspondence, in the periods between sessions and meetings, as direct contacts are not always possible during such intervals.

Some national organizations could undertake certain projects of IFLA and bear the costs incurred; this would enable the Federation to do without permanent bodies.

In conclusion, I should like to state that we ought to stimulate and encourage contacts in every possible way, seek new forms for coordinating our activities with such large non-governmental organizations as the International Federation for Documentation (FID) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Links with international governmental organizations, with Unesco above all, should also be further promoted. All these partners of ours have many common questions to tackle. Apart from providing useful occasions for the exchange of views, such cooperation will promote the solution of several big general problems, and avoid a scattering of resources.

At the same time I believe that the establishment outside IFLA of other library associations and organizations should not be encouraged. At times they pursue extremely narrow or purely regional goals.

Thus, for three years directors of national libraries have been discussing the creation of an association of national libraries. After fruitful discussion we agreed that it was more reasonable to settle questions pertaining to national libraries in IFLA sections (such as the Section of National Libraries, the Section of Mechanization, and others), whereas specific national library problems would best be treated by setting up a "round table" of directors within the framework of IFLA, which was undoubtedly the best solution.

IFLA should favour the coordination within its framework of such closed organizations as INTAMEL and the International Association of Music Libraries. The division of IFLA members by region should not be encouraged. Soviet librarians are against the dismemberment of library activity; they favour consolidation and concentration of the Federation's efforts on the main issues uniting all librarians rather than on small, local problems which can be settled by the national bodies outside the framework of the international organization.

We hope that IFLA, entering the next half century of its history, will make every effort to ensure that the book — the great creation of human genius — serves the cause of humanism, peace and progress.