

Foreword

IFLA – Past and Present

After half a century's existence an international organization – now a large one – has its history to relate, and when this space of time has been marked by war and destruction, as well as by inconceivable progress and bloom of literary culture, and thus of libraries, then the history of an international library organization is a thrilling one.

Librarians are not, admittedly, among those who make crucial political decisions on mutual relations in society, or decisively influence the development of economic conditions. But we are part of the humanistic brotherhood, who realize that the sea cannot be tamed, but try to clean up and regulate smaller streams, thus providing better conditions for growth and development.

The motives of those who backed the creation of IFLA were precisely the cleaning up and regulation of relations that had sanded up during a world war, particularly European relations between libraries and librarians. Besides the re-creation of classical links between centres of learning in the Western World, their aim was also the opening up of more wide ranging international lines of communication. After the destruction of the second World War the survivors continued and expanded our organization, in faith and determination.

It is right and proper that the history of the organization should be written at its semicentenary. The personal evidence of some of the librarians who have taken a lead in the development of to-day's IFLA is an inspiration to all of us.

But besides the tale of history, this publication aims at a contemporary evaluation, criticism, and advice concerning our future. This is why we have asked a number of eminent personalities to contribute, not their conventional and symphatetic congratulations, but opinions and perspectives for our activities in years to come.

In 1976 our General Council unanimously adopted a completely new structure for the work and inner coherence in the organization. We changed its name "International Federation of Library Associations" by adding "and Institutions", because IFLA – our unchanged acronym – has developed into something beyond the original exclusive circle of European and American library associations, and much more connected with daily work in the multitude of library and related institutions all over the world.

The new structure is a framework for global co-operation among all types of libraries, and for all functions, specialities and aspects of library work. The different Sections and Divisions provide fora for activities, discussion and debate out of which should hopefully crystallize a firm basis for the progress of libraries as well as for the professional development of the individual librarian.

On behalf of IFLA I thank the authors of each single contribution, and the editors of this our first jubilee publication.

Preben Kirkegaard
President

