In 2005, IFLA’s Statistics and Evaluation Section teamed up with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), having its headquarters located in Montréal, and with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), for an international project on library statistics. In February 2006, these three major international organizations agreed to create, within the following three years, a common project of data collection for public and university libraries. This outstanding international cooperation between IFLA, UNESCO, and ISO set out to establish standardized ‘Global Statistics’ indicators allowing us to compare countries across the world. Following the ISO 2789 standard, the creation of a standardized management list of indicators offers world-class comparable data on the status of libraries relating to resources, operational costs, and circulation and visit.

A more extensive description of the project and definitions of the standardized indicators (Global Statistics) are available on IFLA’s website, http://www.ifla.org/VII/s22/project/GlobalStatistics.htm.

The use of the dataset was trialled by UIS in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2007. Library data from the region, obtained from the first phase of the project, was specially processed by the Research Group, which, among others, consisted of representatives from UNESCO, IFLA, and École de bibliothéconomie et des sciences de l’information de l’Université de Montréal (EBSI).

Results from the new statistical study on public and university libraries were presented at IFLA’s post-conference satellite meeting in Montréal on 18–19 August 2008. Additional sessions were also held at the conference to show the most recent developments in various countries in terms of statistics, performance evaluation and benchmark studies at public libraries and university libraries. The plenary sessions reported on the results, provided feedback from the recipients of the survey and helped to suggest improvements and establish more specific directions for UNESCO’s new data collection mode. This publication reproduces the papers presented at the conference. The presentations themselves are available at the conference website, http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/ifla/

The host organisers of the conference were Montréal Public Library Network and Concordia University Library Services. Other partners were the Sub-Committee on Libraries of the Conférence des Recteurs et des Principaux des Universités du Québec, Bibliothèques publiques du Québec, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, and Library and Archives Canada. The conference arrangements were managed by the Corporation of Professional Librarians of Quebec. The conference received sponsorship from Montréal Cultural Development Service, the Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine, Concordia University, Canadian Urban Libraries Council, Canadian Association of Research Libraries, IFLA Statistics and Evaluation Section, Counting Opinions, Library Bound Inc. and Whitehots – Canadian Library Services. Their support is gratefully acknowledged.
The conference papers are published here as supplied. In the interests of speed of publication, no attempt has been made to bring uniformity in the styles of referencing (footnotes, endnotes, citation styles). All of the presentations given at the conference are reproduced here with the exception of that by Jesús Lau, for reasons beyond our control. The abstract of Dr Lau’s presentation is reproduced here, and it provides a reference to a related publication which covers many of the topics touched upon by Dr Lau in his valuable contribution to the conference.

Michael Heaney
Secretary, IFLA Statistics and Evaluation Section Standing Committee