

# Auf Wiedersehen:

## IFLA World Congress Draws 4,500 to Berlin

Some 4,500 professionals from 131 countries gathered in Berlin, Germany, August 1–9 for the World Library and Information Congress, the newly renamed annual conference of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). The IFLA conference is arguably the world's most important and widely attended international library conference, offering nine days of programming emanating from eight divisions and 45 sections involved in every conceivable area of international librarianship.

Among the featured speakers was Jean-Marie Arnoult, inspector general of libraries in France, who recently returned from a UNESCO mission to assess the damage to libraries and other cultural institutions in Iraq. Arnoult reported that what he had seen in Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra was “a shock.” The contents of libraries and archives were systematically burned, he said, “and nothing was done to protect them.”

Arnoult said he had seen destruction of buildings and collections on a massive scale, and protecting them clearly “was not a first priority” of the occupying American-led forces (see News Fronts, this issue).

Saying he had taken part in an August 1–2 meeting in Tokyo, where experts from nine countries, including Iraq and the United States, issued a set of recommendations, Arnoult said one of them was that UNESCO set up an international committee to coordinate recovery efforts. His complete report is available on the IFLA website at [www.ifla.org](http://www.ifla.org).

Kay Raseroka of Botswana, who at the close of the conference succeeded Christine Deschamps of France as IFLA president, noted that developments in the United States—particularly passage of the USA Patriot Act—have alarmed librarians in developing nations who look to the United States as an

example of democratic principles.

New President-elect Alex Byrne of Australia hosted a FAIFE meeting at which Raseroka spoke. The Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression committee also provided a platform for Stuart Hamilton, IFLA/FAIFE PhD scholar from the U.K., who presented a scathing indictment of the Patriot Act and other American legislation that abridges First Amendment rights.

Speaking from the audience, James Neal, vice president for information services at Columbia University, compared the current political climate in the U.S. to the McCarthy era and emphasized that American librarians were doing all they could to monitor and combat the threatening provisions of the act.

The FAIFE meeting, with more than 600 people present, was perhaps the conference's most stunning example of professional accord. With dozens of countries represented and the United States under the gun, the common agenda of information professionals the world over shone through. As Byrne said, “Freedom is something for which we must fight, not by limiting it but by enhancing it.”

Byrne also announced the publication of *Intellectual Freedom in the Information Society: Libraries and the Internet*, number three in FAIFE's World Report series. The 240-page book is a roundup of Internet policies and censorship reports from 88 countries.

“Berlin, the capital of reunited Germany, once a symbol of division, not only of Germany, but also of Europe as a whole,” said Deschamps, “is a tangible reminder of the importance of building bridges between all nations of the world,” as reflected in the conference theme, “Access Point Library: Media, Information, Culture.”

American IFLA delegates numbered over 400 (second highest after Germany), but many felt that oppo-



IFLA

**The conference organizing committee sponsored a reception for IFLA board members at the Berliner Rathaus, or town hall, now the official seat of the mayor.**

sition to the war in Iraq was taking a political toll on American leadership in the international library arena. In a preconference mail ballot, IFLA voting members defeated all four American candidates for 10 at-large vacancies on the governing board. Winston Tabb of Johns Hopkins University came in last in the IFLA presidential election, with Alex Byrne elected with nearly twice the



Carlon Walker



Fellowship winners pose with ALA President Carla Hayden (front row, third from left), International Relations Office Director Michael Dowling (back row, third from right), and Special Libraries Association President Cynthia Hill (second from right). Jean-Marie Arnoult of France (right) tells about the library destruction he saw on a recent visit to Iraq.



Sophie Reibold

votes (495 to Tabb's 257). Claudia Lux of Germany came in second with 384 votes.

Various national caucuses met during the convention, and the American session centered on the election and backlash from U.S. government policies. Convener Duane Webster, executive director of the Association of Research Libraries, asserted that Americans needed to be more strategic. "We ran too many candidates," he said.

American candidates did well, however, in standing-committee elections. Nancy Gwinn of the

Smithsonian Institution, Edward Swanson of the University of Minnesota, and Barbara Tillet of the Library of Congress were elected to the 21-member governing board (more than from any other country). ALA Executive Director Keith Michael Fiels was one of 20 members elected to the Management of Library Associations Section.

Explaining that all four speakers at the American caucus (Tabb, Sally McCallum of the Library of Congress, Mary E. Jackson of the Association of Research Libraries, and Wanda Dole of Washburn University in Kansas) would be leaving their positions on the governing board at the end of the Berlin conference, Webster stated that the Bush administration "has acted in ways that make Americans less popular in Europe."

Raseroka reassured the caucus that associations are the basis of IFLA and that the federation wants to partner with American associations. "We appreciate your skills," she said. "Your success is our success. If the Americans are doing it, we can do it."

Barbara Ford, director of the Mortensen Center for International

Library Programs at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, announced that 15 librarians from the Americas received fellowships—created with net revenues from the Boston IFLA conference in 2001—for IFLA in Berlin. The winners were selected from 400 applicants and represent 15 countries in North, South, and Central America and the Caribbean. The fellowships will be offered again for the 2004 IFLA conference in Buenos Aires, Ford said.

### **Speakers stick with traditions**

Ranga Yogeshwar, grandson of Indian library immortal S. R. Ranganathan, emceed the opening session, waxing poetic about the changes that have occurred in libraries since IFLA was last in Germany—at Munich in 1983 (*AL*, Oct. 1983, p. 584–585). Berlin Mayor Klaus Wowereit thanked librarians for proving wrong those who had predicted the death of books and reading.

Publisher and longtime IFLA supporter Klaus Gerhard Saur (K.G. Saur Publishing is the publisher of many IFLA publications) delivered the keynote speech, talking about



Kurt Vinton-Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation



Leonard Kniffel

Accepting the Gates Foundation's Access to Learning Award for Cape Town (from left): Mymoena Ismail, S.M.E. Bengu (Ambassador of South Africa to Germany), Mayor Nomaindia Mfeketo, Pierre Uys, and Nirvesh Sooful. Aloft with balloons representing the many countries of IFLA, President Christine Deschamps (left) says goodbye after a six-year term.

Saur also raised the specter of World War II, recapping the federation's relationship to Germany: "It was planned to hold an IFLA conference in Germany in the 1930s," he said, "but in spite of the fact that the Olympic Games were staged in Berlin and Garmisch in 1936 and the International Publishers Conference was held in Leipzig and Berlin in 1938, IFLA always refused to contemplate a meeting in Nazi Germany."

Tackling the print-vs.-Internet debate, Klaus Ring, managing director of Germany's Stiftung Lesen (Reading Institute), noted that although computer users are more likely to buy books than non-users, a recent foundation study shows that German readers are "less willing to invest time in reading," with the number of people who daily open a book halved since 1992. He concluded that "the book will continue to maintain its unique and indispensable position within the media mix and alongside the screen media."

library-publisher partnerships, which he has long believed should be expanded. "Libraries must work on retaining their position as the information and knowledge centers of their respective universities, cities, or institutions and on serving their customers," he said.

Rainer Kuhlen, information science professor at Germany's University of Konstanz, offered his spin on "knowledge management" during another plenary session, suggesting that it should be librarians' role "to monitor and coordinate the free flow of information," not merely as information providers but rather as "part of the communication process."

### **Libraries and the world summit**

Emphasizing human resources over technology, Adama Samassékou of Mali, said at another plenary session that although the "digital divide" is his theme, he is convinced that "the danger is no longer the lack of information, rather it is choosing from it." He noted with admiration that 7.7% of Norway's gross national product goes to education.

"Information must be adapted to its audience," Samassékou noted, and "communication must not become homogenized." Billing the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society (scheduled for December 10–12 in Geneva, Switzerland) as "the first stone in a new house for humanity," the secretary general of the WSIS Preparation Committee suggested that librarians need to "press governments for widened connectivity in libraries."

Jeanette Hofmann, a pioneer of Internet study and research in Germany, rounded off the plenary sessions with a presentation on "Democracy and Globalization."

The UNESCO forum, a longstanding annual IFLA program, also concentrated on the World Summit. Abdelaziz Abid, UNESCO senior program specialist, said his organization's chief aim will be to question the assumption that the world is moving to an "Information Society" as opposed to a "Knowledge Society." UNESCO believes it should be the latter, he said.

"The World Summit will consider what opportunities present themselves to developing countries to overcome the digital divide in accessing the world's information and communication resources," Abid ex-

plained. "Africa wishes primarily to address the digital divide, while China, Syria, and other countries wish to exclude free access, copyright, and privacy issues in order to avoid a debate on values. More developed countries wish to make information and communication infrastructure available worldwide, this being the only way in which the required global markets for telecommunications, e-commerce, media, and entertainment services of all sorts will open up."

At a press conference, IFLA Secretary General Ross Shimmon said the federation was concerned that WSIS would become an effort to reinvent the "Information Society" wheel, instead of focusing on the vehicle that already exists—namely, libraries.

More information on WSIS is available at [www.itu.int/wsif/](http://www.itu.int/wsif/).

### **Gates \$1 million to South Africa**

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation presented its fourth annual Access to Learning Award August 5 to the Smart Cape Access Project of Cape Town, South Africa, at a program that has now become a key IFLA event.

Implemented just last year, Smart Cape aims to provide free access to computers and the Internet to the people of Cape Town, beginning with 30 computers in six libraries. The \$1-million award "will help us expand our efforts and bring the project to the remaining 101 libraries in the city," said Cape Town Executive Mayor Nomaindia Mfeketo, accepting the award in Berlin along with Deputy Executive Mayor Pierre Uys, Chief Information Officer Nirvesh Sooful, and Mymoena Ismail, manager of the program.

"Smart Cape has made impressive strides in improving public access to information in Cape Town," said Carol Erickson, senior program officer for the foundation's international library initiatives. She added that it's the city's first effort to offer free access to patrons in disadvantaged neighborhoods who might not otherwise have access.



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**Terms on the governing board ended in Berlin for Americans Mary E. Jackson, Wanda Dole, Sally McCallum, and Winston Tabb. New President-elect Alex Byrne of Australia partakes of a German tradition.**

The foundation has given the international award, which is administered by the Council on Library and Information Resources, to organizations in Finland, Guatemala, Argentina, and Colombia. The award was established to recognize and assist "an outstanding library, library agency, or similar organization that provides patrons with no-cost public access to information in innovative and useful ways."

The IFLA/3M Marketing Award of \$1,000 and a fully paid trip to Berlin went to Mireia Sala of Spain for "The Marketing Campaign: Lecture Clubs of Barcelona Libraries." IFLA/OCLC Early Career Development fellowships for 2004 went to Mac-Anthony Cobblah of Ghana, Musa Wakhungu of Rwanda, Muhammad Rafiq of Pakistan, and Nayana Wijayasundara of Sri Lanka. The IFLA Libraries for the Blind Section and the Ulverscroft Foundation awarded the first Frederic Thorpe Award of £15,000 to the Department of Library, Archive, and Information Studies at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria to set up a computerized catalog and distribution database for visually impaired people in Nigeria.

Over 150 exhibitors—including conference sponsors EBSCO, Geac,



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Elsevier, Thomson ISI, and others—made for a sprawling exhibit floor spread throughout the conference center.

### **Getting down to IFLA business**

The first of two IFLA Council sessions convened during the Berlin conference failed, for the first time in recent memory, to achieve a quorum of voting delegates. Reports proceeded, but proposed statute amendments were removed from the agenda.

Secretary General Shimmon, who plans to retire next May, reported on the federation's strengthened financial health, revisions in its statutes, and an expanded advocacy role as the main achievements of his administration. The federation now has one year's worth of staff salaries in reserve and boasts 1,774 members from 156 countries, he added.

Treasurer Derek Law of the

United Kingdom supported Shimmon's financial assessment, noting that the federation's budget has passed the million mark: 1,027,000 euros in 2002. Fees will increase by only 2% next year, he said, lower than the inflation rate of 3%. He added that IFLA expects a 50,000–60,000 euro surplus this year. His advice: "Spend it!"

The second council session achieved a quorum and saw unanimous passage of a resolution on Iraq that urges governments that have not done so (including the U.S.) to ratify the "Second Protocol of the Hague convention regarding the protection of cultural properties in the event of armed conflict." The resolution also urges IFLA to take a greater role in fostering an understanding of what librarians and libraries in Iraq face and to redouble its efforts, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Blue Shield, in assisting the rebuilding of Iraq's libraries.

Presented by Al Kagan of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a resolution passed deploring "the introduction by a number of countries of legislation which violates fundamental human rights to privacy and unhampered access to information in the name of national security," and castigating the Patriot Act specifically.

A resolution from the Women's Issues Section on "women's information needs" also passed, urging IFLA divisions and sections "to undertake activities to study information needs



Photos by IFLA

Poster session in the Berlin conference center. Inset: Randy Kommey of Ghana and U.S. delegate Christie Koontz were session neighbors.

of women in the member countries in order to enhance information services to women and to augment women's use of information."

Support for the World Summit on the Information Society took the form of a resolution urging library associations and institutions to advocate to their WSIS government representatives for libraries as a global public good. ALA President Carla Hayden was one of the proposers of the resolution.

### *Cultural mixing and mingling*

In addition to 200-plus programs, committee meetings, and working sessions, IFLA 2003 offered attendees many tastes of the host country, including 37 library tours and a cultural evening and reception at the Berlin State Library.

One highlight of the closing session is always the announcement of



what city has been chosen to host an IFLA conference in the distant future. Quebec City was the winner this year, beating out Rome to host the 2008 conference. Buenos Aires and Oslo sent performers to welcome IFLA-goers in 2004 and 2005 respectively, while 2006 is set for Seoul and 2007 for Durban. Ross Shimmon also announced that the five-year lead time was no longer needed and the host city for 2009 would not be announced until the 2005 conference in Oslo. —L.K.

Photos by Leonard Kniffel



Left to right: Local media interviewing Kay Raseroka of Botswana, incoming IFLA president. IFLA maven Wilda Newman finds chapeaued comrades on the streets of Berlin. Adama Samassékou chats with fans after his plenary session. Librarian Uta Orlic leads a group through the library of the Berlin film museum.