

EDITOR'S NOTE

IFLA-Communications have been created with the purpose to serve as a forum for the free exchange of ideas on the present and future work of our Federation. Considering the intense work now in progress in eastern countries for the development of libraries of all description, partly fostered by Unesco, I thought it of actual interest to hear more on what these countries expect from IFLA and on how we could help them more effectively in their activities. Therefore I asked Dr. Ranganathan who is so familiar with library trends in that part of the world to give us his personal views, and he answered most obligingly by drafting a whole and comprehensive program—so comprehensive in fact that its complete realisation would lead IFLA to go hunting on FID's grounds. Nevertheless, as it stands, his paper contains certainly many useful suggestions, and his frank statement will, there is no doubt, help us to a better understanding of the present needs of civilisations older than our which are on the threshold of a powerful revival.

P. B.

IFLA—WHAT IT SHOULD BE AND DO

by

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(Stresses the need for Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, South America and Australasia being allowed positions of responsibility in the IFLA. Gives illustrative lists of the possible spheres of action of the IFLA. Suggests organisational devices to make IFLA a truly international and effective body.)

Dr. Bourgeois, the President of the International Federation of Library Association, has invited me to express my views on the IFLA. I welcome this friendly invitation. Here is a frank statement of my views.

I. *Representative Character*

11 *Historical Background*

The IFLA was founded slightly more than a generation ago. At that time, public library service was widespread only in West Europe and North America. Asia, East Europe, Africa, South America and Austral-

asia were still in the resting period of their culture. Therefore, "international" then meant only Western European and Northern American. Occasionally nationals of other areas used to observe the deliberations of the meetings of the IFLA. Those in possession of the IFLA were usually as courteous and condescending to such occasional visitors, as benevolent rich men are to their poor relatives. This is continued as long as these other nationals are meek and do not ask for any share of anything concerning the IFLA.

12 *Recent Happenings*]

But by the end of World War II, Asia, East Europe, Africa, South America and Australasia have shaken off their rest and recovered from the state of cultural exhaustion. It is no doubt too early now for all of them to enter into the phase of turbulent growth. But what the West achieved in library matters in a century, the newly awakened people are bound to achieve within one generation. The present occupants of the IFLA do not all realise this. Since 1948, I have attended several meetings of the IFLA. They have been all courtesy. But in their proposals and action, the old view that "international" in IFLA is exhausted by Western Europe and Northern America persists. It may be unconscious and even unmeant on their part. But to us outsiders, it is as clear as daylight in the tropics. On account of the scant response of USA to the wooing of Western Europe, "International" means virtually Western European. The rest of the world is "undeveloped". Even an explicit suggestion that those outside the ring should have their share of places in the inner bodies and the cabinet of the IFLA receives only a benign sign of disapproval. The corner of the eye suggests, "Don't be presumptuous".

13 *First Need*

The first need is to make the cabinet and the inner bodies of the International Federation truly international. This can be done by convention. This can be done if the old guards wake up to the change coming over the world at large. On the other hand, the newly awakened nations should not be so rash as to claim even now places on population basis. But it is not unreasonable to distribute the places among the old and the new national groups roughly on the basis of literate population.

14 *Avoidance of Fission*

The more awakened and "developed" nations resent the vested interests developed by Western Europe. Its attitude in the IFLA is not unlike that of the mediaeval land-lords who were too blind in the last century to the agrarian upsurge sweeping against them. Land was equalised by revolution. The awakened countries feel that equalisation of opportunity can be had only by forming another rival IFLA. The U.N. and its Specialised Agencies, which are all at bottom political, have the political acumen to avoid such fission. They throw open at least some "figure-head" offices as baits to keep the newly awakened countries complascent, though all the strings and vital posts are kept among those within the ring. As the IFLA has no political power, it has not developed even this much of political acumen. Avoidance of fission is necessary. It can be done within the present constitution, by the adoption of suitable conventions.

15 *Transitory Provision*

As a first, though transitory, measure, the places in the cabinet of the IFLA should be distributed in the following proportion:—

West Europe and North America	40%
Asia	20%
East Europe	10%
Africa	10%
South America	10%
Australasia	10%

These figures will have to be revised periodically, say once in ten years. The Executive Board should be expanded by the addition of five more members. These and the two vice-presidents should be so selected as to secure the above representation.

2 *Functional Bodies*

21 *Cabinet*

The function of the 10-member Cabinet of the IFLA should be largely of a co-ordinating and activising nature. It should endeavour to pool all the library information of the world. It should also try to establish rock-bottom standards with sufficient tolerance to allow of necessary local

variation. It should be able to harness the best brains in the profession uninfluenced by political considerations and predatory careerists. It should thus find competent men on a truly international basis, to form *ad hoc* Specialised Bodies for definite programmes. Each programme should have a more or less definite time limit attached to it. The cabinet should do effective liaison work with governmental agencies such as UNESCO and WHO, and non-governmental agencies such as FID and ISO.

22 *Functional Bodies*

The following are some of the functional spheres for which *ad hoc* bodies may be needed:—

1. One or more for each of the library techniques such as:—
11 Classification; 12 Cataloguing; 13 Documentation; 14 Subject bibliography; 15 National bibliography; 16 Union catalogue.
2. One or more for each of the service fields such as:—
21 City library service; 22 Rural library service; 23 School library service; 24 University library service; 25 Business library service, including commercial and industrial ones; 26 Library service for abnormals such as hospital patients, the blind, inmates of prisons and sea-farers.
3. One or more for each of the subject fields such as:—
31 Engineering; 32 Agriculture; 33 Medicine; 34 Music and dance; 35 Cinema; 36 Other fine arts; 37 Incunabula; 38 Translations.
4. One or more for each of the organisational fields such as:—
41 Library legislation; 42 Library finance; 43 Library building and equipment; 44 Statistics; 45 Inter-library loan.
5. One or more for liaison-work with other trades and interests such as:—
51 Paper-makers; 52 Printers; 53 Binders; 54 Publishers; 55 Micro-filming and related matters; 56 Machinery for documentary earch; 57 Pre-natal classification and cataloguing of books.
6. Regional Bodies for the study and co-ordination of library problems lending themselves for pursuit on a regional basis such as:—
East Asia, South Asia, Scandinavia, Semitic, Germanic, South America, Latin and Slav regions.
7. One or more for each problem connected with library personnel such as:—

71 Content of education in library science for each of the levels and fields of service mentioned in (2); 72 Methods of teaching library science at different levels; 73 Training of teachers of library science; 74 Status and emoluments; 75 Exchange of librarians; 76 Exchange of teachers of library science; 77 Promotion of research in library science.

23 *Quantum of Pursuit*

The above enumeration of spheres is only illustrative. It is not meant that all the spheres should be pursued simultaneously or at all times. Each sphere will have to be taken up as and when need arises and facilities of finance and personnel are forthcoming. Some spheres such as library statistics may call for permanent *ad hoc* bodies. For some subjects the pursuit may be of the surveying kind, for some of the research kind, for others of the evaluating kind, and for still others of the standardising kind. For the same subject, the pursuit may be of these different kinds at different times.

3 *Secretariat*

31 *General*

The general secretariat of the IFLA should be located at the place of the President. He should have the power (by convention or by statute) to recommend to the general body the names of secretary and treasurer. He should also have the power to appoint the paid staff, subject to the budget-sanction. To make the flow of work continuous, the period of office should be five years at a time for the President.

32 *For Specialised Spheres*

Each *ad hoc* body should have a Rapporteur General appointed on the recommendation of the President, based on (1) competence as evidenced by past work and learned contributions, (2) leisure, local facilities and willingness to do the work and (3) a reasonable distribution of responsibility, for all the specialised spheres taken as a whole, among the different nations. The rest of the members of the *ad hoc* body be nominated in consultation with the Rapporteur-General. The country of the Rapporteur-General should be able to supplement, if necessary, the financial

aid received by him for his assignment, from governmental or non-governmental international bodies. In some cases each of the countries contributing members to the *ad hoc* body may have to give similar financial aid. In a few cases, such as Statistics, it may be best to locate the secretariate in an international governmental body such as the UNESCO, the IFLA playing only an advisory role.

4 *Hands-Off*

The IFLA should discourage the formation of vested interests of any sort—be it in library organisation or library technique. The so-called developed countries generally obstruct new ventures by newly awakening communities. They develop a kind of cataract in the mental eye. No alternative form of technique or organisation is either looked into or tolerated. This mental cataract is the greatest social danger to the dynamic efficiency of library service today. Japan, for example had made much progress in its libraries before World War II. But now it is obliged to swallow the American pill. Western Asia has much of outmoded stuff thrust down its throat, even before it has time to look round and choose. In India, the subtle poison of diplomacy is winning predatories to buy everything coming “on board the ship”. Anything developed east of the Red Sea is resisted, unconsciously perhaps, by many of the old guards of the IFLA. This tendency of the past for the West to perpetuate itself into all times and in all climes is dangerous in all human affairs. It is particularly so in the library sphere which concerns mental interests, so well-known to be fleeting and non-compelling.

41 *A Fortunate Feature*

But a fortunate feature is that the younger generation of the library profession of the West has not developed any cataract of the mental eye. It is free from imperialism. It is open-minded and receptive. But in the present set-up the IFLA does not have the energising benefit of such younger librarians. That is why one has to stress that the IFLA should make a special effort to be on the alert to accept new ideas even though they come from the newly awakened nations. In particular, it must say to itself and to the West “Hands off from the East and the South! No covert coercion please!! The world, including the West, will stand to gain by allowing the newly awakening communities to make new experiments to venture into new paths and to forge something new.”

5 *General Conference*

General international conferences are far too expensive in money and energy. One cannot think of a library conference of that kind to be held more often than once in five years. Usually it can not do much. It can at best be used as a platform for inspiring addresses by savants of high personality. Of course, it will have to receive and record the reports of the cabinet and of the *ad hoc* bodies. Social contact will be there no doubt. There may even be some useful intellectual impact and exchange of ideas, if the virile younger generation is allowed to attend.

51 *Regional Conference*

There may be more positive work to do in a regional conference, for there may be more homogeneity of interests.

52 *Ad Hoc Bodies*

The money available for travel—from whatever source it is culled—will give the best return by providing for the Rapporteur-General of some of the *ad hoc* bodies to travel round to the other members of their respective bodies for intimate discussion and check-up.

6 *International Experts and Travel Aid*

The IFLA is not likely to have much finance. It will have to be merely a promoting body in this respect. In that capacity, it can exercise some wholesome influence on the award of travel-aid and exchange of personnel in such a way that the pursuit of specialised subjects mentioned in section (2) can be helped. At present international travel-aids and fellowship are often wasted on undirected blitztravel by immature youth picked up from "undeveloped countries". Individuals with a positive personality or unwilling to accept blindly the practices of the "developed" politically powerful countries, are avoided. Some of the "experts" descending from "developed" countries on the "undeveloped" ones often encourage sycophancy, do little, and say that doing much will lead to regurgitation among the "underdeveloped". On going back, at the end of their assignment, some of them orally report contemptuously in confidence and give in writing a report for propaganda, whitewashing everything with a benign superior air. Tactical exigency makes the financing body use all

its publicity machinery to howl how successful the assignment had proved to be! This state of affairs blesses neither the one that gives nor the one that takes. IFLA can contribute to the world's library future only if it develops its own stature so as to rise above such power-born human foibles and work for rectitude in international library relation.

7 Hope

If the angularities observable today are analysed here, it is not out of misanthropy or cynicism. I am full of optimism for the future of humanity. Library service has a great part to play in making the different cultural groups understand one another with real sympathy, learn to see the essence of all cultures to be common at bottom, and convince themselves without mutual fear that the differences are only in the ever-changing periphery unduly arresting attention at the moment. To become something of the physician of humanity, to play its role in the promotion of international peace based not on fear of armaments but on love born of understanding and, for that purpose, to make possible effective, full and faultless international communication of all intellectual thought and spiritual experience coming from anywhere in the world, the IFLA should heal itself first, rise above all obstructive insularities and prejudices and make itself truly international. I have every hope that the IFLA will be so transformed by the coming generation of librarians.