**IFLA DIVISION II**

**Summary of Two ZOOM Calls Regarding Re-structuring**

June 18, 2018

The Division II Officers joined a ZOOM call on June 18th to launch the PC restructuring conversation, preliminary to IFLA's next planning round beginning in Kuala Lumpur. In the background document that was shared from HQ, we were asked to conduct the equivalent of a SWOT exercise. Our conversations were not so disciplined; they ranged more broadly. After the first call, we were not finished, and so we scheduled a second ZOOM session for July 24th. This is an effort to summarize the highlights of the two calls, with notes about the topics we spent time on. As always, the Division II leadership is thoughtful and articulate, and I'm grateful for the talent and commitment to IFLA and the profession.

**Background**

Startup time was spent on the background of IFLA PC structure, with its 44 Sections and 17 SIGs. There were questions of how IFLA should be thinking about this very large and disparate collection of activities, how do we view them, and what do we want to convey to the IFLA PC and the GB? What appetite is there for change? Does something HAVE to change at this time?

**Opening Comments: Strength and weaknesses of the current structure**

1. The units in Division II are cohesive and communicative.

2. At a secondary level there might be some overlaps, but, in principle, our Division committees have essential and manageable overlaps. While the great majority of D II is comfortable with this, one of our members sees significant overlap with related committees in *other* Divisions.

3. There are differences between IFLA sections by the nature of the topic or expertise, and also varying levels of participation. Some sections are by definition going to be very large (e.g., National Libraries, Academic libraries) and some that are highly focused and specialized are going to be quite small. This is appropriate, and Division II comments were somewhat resistant to the "Rule of 40." So long as small groups are productive and dynamic, they should not be put under the additional stress of meeting a bright-line number. The basis for reviewing existence should be related to the ability of a group to be 'dynamic.'

4. A weakness of the structure is that SIGs are reviewed every 4 years, but sections and committees are not. There should be an expectation of section review every 3-5 years, and the members of the Committees should devise or adapt their own assessment plan.

**Discussion:** What do we mean by "assessment?" There has to be a process whereby we evaluate if we are efficient and if our jobs are effectively done. In our committees, we are experts, and this requires a different kind of assessment for different units (public libraries would be very different than rare books, for example). Successful completion of a unit's action plan is one component of assessment. Did you do the things you said you would do, and those have to be substantive.

5. It was noted that the IFLA structure resembles the structure of a large academic or national library, with similar programs and departments. Are there other ways to think about an IFLA structure?

6. There is an imbalance between different IFLA terms of office:

\* Committee members can serve for 8 years; for officers, 4 years is not uncommon.

\* GB members serve 2 terms and can stand for re-election, so many serve 4- year terms.

\* Division Chairs serve for 2 years, and thus the PC turns over every 2 years (except for one member who becomes PC chair). Thus, much PC work is slowed or lost and needs to be re-learned. Momentum is thereby lost. This should be changed.

**Other Significant Discussion Topics**

**1. Nimbleness**

Many things in IFLA take longer than they should. Can we find a way to be nimbler to do what we want to do? Is it possible to have a structure to enable the change easily when it is needed?

For example, the Audio Visual section wanted to change its name but was told to hold wait until after re-structuring discussions and decisions. Ditto for Serials and Other Continuing Resources.

Nimbleness is also needed at the section level: committees must review their section's scope at least every 2 years and update it; web pages should be up to date. Various scope descriptions are not as they should be.

**2. Participation-Inclusion in decision-making**

IFLA has been a top-down organization but clearly wishes to change to reflect members’ voices more fully. We appreciate the new outreach down to committee officers. Previous initiatives were created without a lot of committee participation and that alienated or created distance.

Not only do existing committees and officers have to be included, but we also need to "step up," to drive IFLA's discussion and shape the decisions.

Any radical or substantial changes, such as re-naming or merging groups require ALL member involvement, i.e., involvement of standing committee members AND the entire section membership. (Jim Church gave an example of the Government Documents Round Table of ALA, all of whose members had a say about whether or not to merge with another section. The decision was made with full support of its membership.)

**3. Homogeneous or diverse?**

Committees inevitably will be and should be different sizes and shapes. Is there too much expectation of homogenization, as all committees need to meet certain baselines? We do appreciate that to some extent membership thresholds relate to sustainability and available support form IFLA.

**4. Professional vs. Policy in IFLA**

GB may be far less aware of the PC side, unless individual GB members have come up actively thru the professional ranks.

Why do we think of PC and GB as separate entities? We are stuck in the structure of the last 20 years, that it is hard to think outside of it. Both sides are important. The professional side has also to shape policy?

How are we defining the professional side vs. policy side? IFLA needs a seat at the global tables, which is so very important. Still, that level of effort is disconnected from what the majority of IFLA participants are doing. More IFLA staff appear to work on the policy side, whereas more member participants work in specialist committees. Would it be valuable to read full description of the IFLA HQ staff and their roles?

The policy vs. professional committees give the sense that some sections can be more important than others. More senior library people are engaged in the global policy discussions.

**5. Overlap**

Within Division II, we don't see much so much overlap. Often section descriptions will mention cataloging or preservation, but those aren't serious overlaps -- they're at a secondary level, not at the primary mission level. Committee expertise is very distinct. And across the Divisions, there are also "necessary" overlaps, which can be seen by drawing a Venn diagram; the overlaps are modest, not substantial. Some overlap is necessary; we shouldn't all be off in a corner doing our own thing. Sections frequently collaborate with others in programming and other activities.

"Are there overlaps?" is an old-fashioned question. A "yes" answer presumes an automatic re-structuring, and it shouldn't necessarily do so.

**6. Operations**

Who are our members? How do we know this and how do we reach them? There was a great deal of conversation around this point, raising such points as:

* Are our members aware of being members? There are difficulties to contact the members who are not aware of or distant from their membership choices when they joined IFLA. For institutional members, the contacts are generally heads of the Libraries and Associations, who are not knowledgeable of the matters discussed within the various sections.
* When an organization joins a section, it needs to designate a contact person who is a professional working in the area that is covered by the section.

**Discussion:** Each committee receives a spreadsheet listing its section members. If the institutions haven't ticked the right box, we don't know who they are, and IFLA is not allowed to tell us? How can we persuade and gather support from our institutional members, where it's not clear what benefit institutions get from participating; we either can't reach a number of them, or the right people in their organizations.

On the spreadsheet, there are also empty spaces -- we cannot contact those organizations at all. I.e., there may be no name, no email addresses: the actual line is at times blank, so sometimes one doesn't even know the institution. And when there is a contact, it's likely to be the CEO or UL. Committees have tried to find specific expert contacts deeper in the organization, but it's really hard to impossible. When institutions join, can we please ask them to designate the professionals who will work on the PC side?

As an organization, IFLA must tell its members that they have to give crucial contact information -- it should be obligatory. We need IFLA support to fill out those blanks and spreadsheets. IFLA notes these issues are due to privacy legislation in the Netherlands and beyond. But if an organization makes it clear, at the point when members sign up, that normal business requires communication -- specific consent is not required (this from the UK). That issue must be reviewed. We ask IFLA to improve its protocol for communications. It is IFLA's task to figure this out.

We need **real** mailing lists -- that would advance our work.

**7. Specific Situations**

A few in Division II are in the situation of "skating on the edge" of the current guidelines. The question is asked, could they become SIGs?" Not really, as SIGs were always designed to be "temporary," and these topics are ongoing. Small groups can have a big audience for their open programs; they can support interesting and useful publications. Why would IFLA not want small groups to exist?

**Genealogy and Local history:** reacting negatively to this situation. We are re-defining our scope and purpose.

**News Media**: don't see that we could merge anywhere; we are very specific, though a very small standing committee, which has a strong history of excellent mid-term meetings and publications. However, coming from a small group is difficult. For example, going to the meetings is expensive. KL is expensive -- what is hardly anyone can afford to attend? We are asking members to make a financial commitment that's substantial.

**Government Information:**  was able to turn around and increase its membership. What's the process for disbanding committees? How do we reflect the will of our institutional and personal members? It's not just about IFLA - any changes need to be discussed with the whole constituency, all of whom need to be engaged.

**Serials and Other Continuing Resources**: When SOCRS asked for a name change, there were many committees that had some kind of interest and needed to be consulted. And yet none of the existing committees have quite the mandate that SOCRS proposed.

**8. The Role of Individual Members in IFLA**

Peter Bae reported on the ALA Midwinter announcement to reduce individual membership dues by half. If individual members grow, that might help smaller sections. Individuals show up on the membership spreadsheet. It may be that individual members are a way to increase the number of section members?

Individual members can nominate members to the committee, which is important. With enough individual members, a committee could accrete a fair amount of power and participation. Our Division has a lot of specialists, so having individual members would be very important. These could come from smaller institutions, where the institution may never be able to become a member.

Our discussion has focused on the structure of IFLA's groups, overlaps, etc., but can we make sure that there's also a clarification about the requirement & roles for institutional vs. personal members? If the reduction of dues brings in more individual members, where do they fit in all this?

**9.** **Global vision Impact on Structure.** Will the global vision discussions be pertinent to the re-structuring discussions? The immense of time and energy into Global Vision should have some impact on structure discussions. But how will this happen? The 10 Highlights and Opportunities are at a fairly high level of principles, etc. It will be challenging to bring those 10 points into an actual structural discussion. They are more like values.

Still we need integration between the 10 points, the strategic plan, and the individual sections' work. Strategic directions have grown in importance -- emphasis on how you fulfill directions. How do KIs fit with committees? That's very important and it has also been very challenging, though we are learning.

[Gates Foundation is helping us to hire expert consultants to help us make the connections.]

**10. Miscellaneous Comments**

**Service or technical mission?** Are the sections named correctly any longer? Many of us regard ourselves as services, not just as technical experts.

**Benchmarking:** Are there other international organizations that we can benchmark? Are there similar organizations we can study? International Council on Archives was mentioned as an example. Agreed that benchmarking is a good idea.

**Technology Capability at IFLA:** Several in Division II would like to see a Technology Office at IFLA, to advise on technology options, benchmarks, best practices, rather than one IFLA committee concerned with IT. This office could help by reaching out to members to do surveys, for example, on a scale that a small committee could not do.

**Dynamic Unit Document -- a caution:** The Dynamic Unit document is daunting -- even most active sections cannot achieve all that, but that doesn't mean they should disband.

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