

IFLA Links Librarians Worldwide

by Edward T. Hart

More than 5,000 delegates from 149 countries convened at the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions Council and General Conference Aug. 16-25 in Boston to discuss problems and share ideas facing libraries worldwide.

Co-sponsored by AALL and five other major library associations in the United States, IFLA's 67th annual meeting allowed librarians from across the world to meet and learn from each other. This year librarians from the largest national and research libraries, such as the Library of Congress and La Bibliotheque National de France, as well elementary school and public librarians from developing countries, such as Asia and Africa, gathered at the international meeting.

Echoing the challenges to fulfill the time-honored mission of libraries to facilitate the free flow of information,

this year's conference theme was "Libraries and Librarians: Making a Difference in the Knowledge Age." Because the host country is responsible for organizing much of the conference, many of the programs focused on issues important to U.S. librarians, such as access to information, intellectual freedom and public awareness.

One issue that received significant coverage at the meeting was copyright and the role of libraries and librarians in protecting the rights of users. Professor Peter Jaszi of the American University Washington College of Law explained that librarians need to be prepared to represent their users as they balance the rights of copyright owners and information services with the needs of users. He specifically warned the audience about the spread of usage licenses for accessing information on databases rather than the purchase of the materials by libraries.

But it wasn't all business. Attendees got the chance to take part in a number of social activities. Participants toured more than 30 of Boston's renowned libraries, including law and academic libraries. Evening events consisted of receptions and cultural performances at the Boston Public Library, Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Museum of Science.

IFLA's next annual meeting will be held Aug. 18-24, 2002, in Glasgow, Scotland. The tentative agenda includes a visit to the National Library of Scotland, a reception at the National Museums of Scotland and a half-marathon through the streets of Glasgow. The marathon is a fund-raising event for IFLA's charity "Books for All."



Founded in 1927 in Edinburgh, Scotland, IFLA is an international, nongovernmental and nonprofit organization that represents the interests of libraries, information services and their users before such groups as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Trade Organization. Headquartered in The Hague, Netherlands, IFLA's three primary aims are to:

- promote high standards of provision and delivery of library and information services;
- encourage widespread understanding of the value of good library and information services; and
- represent the interests of its members throughout the world.

Edward T. Hart (ehart@nesl.edu), acquisitions/government documents librarian at the New England School of Law in Boston, attended his first IFLA meeting this year.

Oakley Appointed to IFLA Committee

During the conference, IFLA board member Nancy John announced that AALL Past President Robert L. Oakley was appointed to a four-year term as the only U.S. member of the IFLA Standing Committee on Copyright and Other Legal Matters. The committee focuses on legal matters of significance to libraries and librarianship, such as copyright and intellectual property issues, economic and trade barriers to the acquisition of library materials, disputed claims of ownership of library materials, authenticity of electronic texts, and subscription and license agreements. With Oakley's appointment, AALL will be working with IFLA to create at least one program specifically for law librarians each year at IFLA's annual meetings.

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