

IFLA and Social Responsibility: A Core Value of Librarianship

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“...And our species, when one day it is completely formed, will not define itself as the sum of the world’s inhabitants, but as the infinite unity of their reciprocal relations.” Jean-Paul Sartre¹

Introduction

What does it mean to be a socially responsible librarian? As a young librarian attending the 1985 Chicago IFLA meeting, I was awestruck when E. J. Josey² interrupted the first plenary session to demand that IFLA dissociate itself from apartheid South Africa. I later learned of his work in desegregating libraries in the southern states of the United States. His enormous energy and courage shaped my own understanding of librarianship – a belief that the core values of our profession demand that we take seriously our own role in furthering justice in our communities.

Writing an article on socially responsible librarianship is rather daunting because the topic is so huge. In these days when war and the threat of terrorism confront many of us everyday, we need to assess new priorities at the local, national, and international levels. How can we think locally and act globally, and how can we think globally and act locally? The 2003 IFLA resolution in Berlin on national security legislation comes to mind.³ We need to try to preserve privacy rights for our library users against legislation such as the USA Patriot Act and similar legislation in many countries. We can’t let these laws intimidate people from checking out the library materials they want to read or see. We must continue to promote free access to government information as a basic component of good government. It is obvious that people must be able to access information in order to intelligently participate in decision-making. We must defend Freedom of speech, which is of course a prerequisite for democracy. Ralph Nader has taught Americans that we must go back to being “citizens” rather than only “consumers.” Public libraries provide community information on local health services, bus routes, job opportunities, and other social services. Libraries can also provide tax forms and condoms to prevent HIV/AIDS. Public libraries can be a place for literacy classes and voter registration. They can indeed become community centers where people, including poor people, immigrants, and diverse populations of all kinds find materials and participate in local culture and civic affairs to actualize their potentials and develop their communities.

Of course, library associations play an important role in contextualizing library practices at the national and international levels. And it is therefore a pleasure to be invited to write this article on IFLA and socially responsible librarianship for IFLA’s World Report. In a sense it is quite personal because of my involvement for so many years in the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) of the American Library Association (ALA) and in the IFLA Social

¹ Sartre’s preface to Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Paris: Maspéro, 1961.

² The second African-American President of the American Library Association, 1984-1985.

³ See <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla69/resolutions.htm>

Responsibilities Discussion Group (SRDG). Although the terminology may vary by language, I think the English usage of the phrase, “social responsibilities” comes from the establishment of SRRT about thirty-five years ago. It is therefore useful to explore some of this library history.

The American Library Association has lobbied on social justice issues since at least World War I.⁴ However the debate really heated up in the late 1960s and early 1970s when North America and Europe were undergoing a period of great social upheaval. Large social movements in the United States arose demanding an end to racism, opposition to the US war on Southeast Asia, and much more room for individual freedoms and expression. Since libraries exist within society, these social movements were naturally reflected in the lives of librarians and within the American Library Association. One reaction to this tension was the publication of David Berninghausen’s article claiming that ALA could not survive if it continued down the social responsibility path.⁵ He advocated AGAINST addressing the issues of his time, and he enumerated many of them that presumably were debated in the ALA Council. These included racial injustice, pollution, a strong United Nations, homosexuality, voting age, the separation of church and state, building universities, supporting political prisoners, and any other so-called non-library issues “regardless of how vital they may be for the future of humanity.” He did not list opposition to the Viet Nam War, but that issue also belatedly cleared the ALA Council. Those who felt strongly that ALA must and should take positions on controversial issues have been vindicated. ALA continues to grow each year, and its vital role in national discussions has never been more important. The accolades for the organization’s strong advocacy against some of the provisions of the USA Patriot Act clearly make that case.

Berninghausen argued that ALA was established for a common purpose, “...to promote library service and librarianship.”⁶ He believed that taking stands on social justice issues would undermine ALA’s credibility as a defender of intellectual freedom, and he wrongly assumed that progressives would abandon the principle of building balanced collections. In response, Pat Schuman stated that libraries were in fact part of society, and that societal “sickness” such as racism, poverty and war interfere with the free flow of information.⁷ Robbins noted that support for Berninghausen’s view resulted in “myopic professionalism ...to support intellectual freedom for those who have power while denying it to those who are powerless.”⁸ Sellen, Schuman, and Robbins argued that social issues are library issues because libraries exist within society, the real world with all its problems and possibilities.

At a deeper level, this is a debate about the nature and ideology of librarianship. A narrow instrumentalist view leads to a passive profession content to follow the societal trends of the day and adjust accordingly. A wider truly professional view leads to active engagement in the larger world to actualize our values and make our world a better place.

⁴ Some of this material on ALA and SRRT was adapted from the author’s “Living in the Real World: A Decade of Progressive Librarianship in the USA and in International Library Organizations,” *Innovation: A Journal for Appropriate Librarianship and Information Work in Southern Africa* no. 22 (June 2001): 10-19.

⁵ David Berninghausen, “Social Responsibility vs. the Library Bill of Rights,” *Library Journal*, 97, 20 (November 15, 1972): 3675-3681.

⁶ ALA Constitution, Article II, Section I.

⁷ Pat Schuman in “The Berninghausen Debate,” *Library Journal*, 98, 1 (January 1, 1973): 28-29.

⁸ Jane Robbins in “The Berninghausen Debate,” *Library Journal*, 98, 1 (January 1, 1973): 29.

This article will place the idea of social responsible librarianship in its historical context, beginning with the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association, moving on to several international efforts organized by North and South American, European, and South African groups, and ending with IFLA, and especially the IFLA FAIFE. Building on past achievements and learning from our shortcomings, we can determine a few areas for current and future FAIFE initiatives.

Inequality

World inequality is growing. The income range between the richest five countries and the poorest countries was a factor of three in 1820, rose to eleven by 1913, surged to thirty-five by 1950, and increased to seventy-two by 1992.⁹ The United Nations Development Programme calls this a “dangerous polarization’ between the rich and the poor. Furthermore, the gaps within countries are increasing. The affluent elites, especially in the capital cities, live well and have access to libraries and information, but the poor are lagging behind. This so-called “digital divide” is nothing new. The UNDP shows the same divergence in access to electricity and telephones.¹⁰ We might also cite access to books, journals, videos, community information, and indeed literacy itself.

These gaps are even evident in rich countries like the United States, which has more computers than the entire rest of the world. For example, in the year 2000, computers went from a minority to a majority (51%) acquisition for US homes. 88% of households with an income of \$75,000 or more had computers but for households with incomes less than \$25,000, only 28% owned computers. Only 37% of black adults and 35% of Hispanic adults owned computers.¹¹

The terminology is important for our understanding. This author has argued elsewhere that the term “digital divide” disguises rather than clarifies the problem of systemic inequality in the world economy based on neo-liberal economics, the World Bank’s Economic Structural Adjustment policies, massive unupportable debt payments, and unfair trade regimes under the World Trade Organization.¹² Perhaps the term “information crisis” more accurately describes this phenomenon.

The ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT)

“...ALA recognizes its broad social responsibilities....” From the Introduction to section one of the “ALA Policy Manual.”

⁹ Human Development Report, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press for the United Nations Development Programme, 1999, p. 38.

¹⁰ Human Development Report, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press for the United Nations Development Programme, 2001, p.41.

¹¹ US Bureau of the Census, noted in “Report counts computers in majority of U.S. Homes,” New York Times, 7 September 2001, p. A15.

¹² Introduction to “The African Information Crisis,” ACAS Bulletin, no. 62/63, Spring 2002, 1-5. ACAS is the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars.

Before engaging IFLA and other international efforts, it seems appropriate to provide some information about what SRRT is and what it has accomplished as a model for what FAIFE might consider in the immediate future. It is obvious that advocating controversial issues is never easy and sometimes puts one at risk. It is a tribute to the perseverance and personal courage of so many library activists that so much has been accomplished.

The Social Responsibilities Round Table is one of sixteen round tables within ALA. As one of the largest ones (over 1600 members), it has representation on the ALA Council, which is the governing body. It publishes a newsletter, has a website, and gives awards.¹³ In addition, several of its task forces also publish their own newsletters. As ALA is governed by a Council, SRRT is governed by an Action Council. It is presently made up of 8 at-large elected members, chairs of all the task forces, representatives of state and other affiliate groups, the SRRT Councilor to the ALA Council, and the Newsletter Editor (ex officio). The Action Council elects a Coordinator, Secretary, Treasurer, and approves a Newsletter Editor.

Current task forces include: Alternatives in Print; Environment; Feminist; Hunger, Homeless and Poverty; Information Policy in the Public Interest; International Responsibilities; and Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday. As a decentralized organization, task forces initiate much of the work including programs and resolutions.

For the period 1991-2005, SRRT has sponsored more than 140 programs during the ALA annual meetings in the following categories:

Alternative Press	23
Environment	21
Feminism	19
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgendered	17
Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday	16
International Responsibilities	12
African-American Children's Books	11
Hunger, Homelessness And Poverty	6
Peace	4
Information Policy	2
Library Unions	1
Workplace Freedom	1
Censorship of Museum Exhibits	1
Forming a Worldwide Network	1
Preservation of Original Documents	1

Examples of recent SRRT programs include:

Are You Missing any Information?: Speaking & Publishing Freely on the Environment
 Best Copy Available [Nicholson Baker on preserving original documents]
 Cuba: Sovereignty, Development and Intellectual Freedom

¹³ See <http://libr.org/SRRT/>

Cultural Democracy and the Information Commons
Economic Barriers to Library Access
Energy Efficiency, Friendly Buildings, and Librarians' Sustainability
Erotica in Libraries
Librarians Confront the War in Iraq
Making Earth Day Every Day
Pornography, Feminism and the Internet
The WTO and Libraries: Perspectives on Globalization

SRRT Resolutions have often resulted from programs, and these resolutions were sometimes forwarded to the ALA Council. They have addressed a wide range of issues, which can be seen in the list of twelve topics and examples below. At least 81 resolutions were approved from 1991 to 2005 (excluding internal SRRT business). Most of these were intended to not only put the Round Table on record, but also to be distributed to relevant bodies in order to help support some cause or position. SRRT has never been bashful in addressing government agencies and politicians. Of these 81 resolutions, only fifteen were sent to ALA Council either through passage at an ALA Membership Meeting, through friendly Councilors At Large, or more recently through the new SRRT Councilor (since January 2000). The SRRT Action Council has strategically picked when to engage the ALA Council; most resolutions were considered so far from winnable that they were not sent there for debate. Of the fifteen resolutions that did go to Council, four have passed, two have passed in a watered down form, eight have failed, and one is pending.

After many years of prodding, the ALA Council finally implemented its own affiliation policy and broke its relationship with the Boy Scouts of America over their homophobic policy. ALA's commitment to equity in library services made it possible to pass a good policy on services to poor people, but it took many years of effort to begin some work on implementation. One battle was originally won and later overturned, the criticism of censorship in Israel and the Occupied Territories. As a practical matter, SRRT's international efforts have usually concentrated on issues and countries that are directly tied to U.S. foreign policy. Since the U.S. gives \$2 to \$3 billion per year to Israel, it seemed appropriate to target intellectual freedom and human rights violations in that country and the territories it illegally occupies. Because of ALA's commitment to intellectual freedom, and through a real democratic process, SRRT was able to pass two resolutions through the Membership Meeting and then the ALA Council in 1992. One defended the rights of a librarian in a Palestinian university, and the other called for real freedom of expression in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. This provoked an intense backlash when some American Zionist lobby groups heard what had happened. These groups were able to pack the next Membership Meeting, overturn the broad membership resolution on intellectual freedom, and then overturn the Council resolution. In fact, the ALA Council nearly debated abolishing SRRT! And to try to prevent future Membership Meeting actions, the Council orchestrated the implementation of a nearly impossible Membership Meeting quorum. It is a pleasure to report that after eleven years, a Membership referendum has just passed to reinstate a reasonable quorum.

SRRT resolutions that have passed the ALA Council in a much watered-down form concerned the USA PATRIOT Act and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). SRRT

resolutions that have failed in Council include: two resolutions on socially responsible investing of ALA's endowment fund, opposition to an ALA partnership with MacDonald's, thorough opposition to outsourcing, restrictions on Gates Foundation practices, putting a union boycott clause in future hotel contracts, and two resolutions on reducing the quorum for ALA Membership Meetings. The pending resolution is on the protection of workplace speech.

The 81 SRRT resolutions can be categorized in the following topics:

International Responsibilities	25
Intellectual Freedom	18
ALA Governance/Democracy	10
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender	6
Environment	4
Racism	5
Library of Congress Issues	3
Labor Relations	3
Poverty	3
Alternative Press	1
Women's Issues	1
Library Education	1

Examples of recent SRRT resolutions include:

- Cultural Democracy as a Core Value
- Ending of Restrictions on US Citizens' Travel to Cuba
- Ending the US Occupation of Iraq
- Prohibition of Racist Training Materials by the US Military
- Protection of Workplace Speech
- Repealing the Entire USA Patriot Act
- Torture as a Violation of Our Basic Values as Librarians

International Efforts¹⁴

The Progressive Librarians Guild began as an independent regional organization in the New York/Mid-Atlantic area of the United States in 1990. However it quickly became a national body and soon attracted international members. It also quickly affiliated with the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association (SRRT) in order to have one foot inside and one foot outside the American Library Association (ALA). Besides sponsoring outstanding ALA programs, its greatest accomplishment is its journal, the *Progressive Librarian*. For further information, see the website.¹⁵

Raimund Dehmlow in Hannover, Germany began an online directory of “Progressive Librarians Around the World” in 1997 or 1998. It included library organizations, individual libraries, individuals, publications, library solidarity projects, and websites. By the time it folded in early 2001, it included listings from 18 countries. Raimund’s directory sparked the idea of calling a meeting of progressive library organizations at the 1998 ALA Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. The Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association was able to get a grant to invite representatives from all the organizations listed. They came from Information for Social Change in the United Kingdom, Arbeitskreis Kritischer BibliothekarInnen (AKRIBIE) in Germany, Arbeitskreis Kritischer BibliothekarInnen im Renner-Institut (KRIBIBI) in Austria, Bibliotek I Samhælle (BIS) in Sweden and the Library and Information Workers Organization (LIWO) in South Africa. The idea was to find ways to cooperate and advance our work across the world. As a result, an informal network and a listserv were established. Meanwhile the directory was growing. AKRIBIE and KRIBIBI called a second meeting in Vienna for November 2000, providing hotel accommodations and food. All of the organizations at the Washington meeting were there as well as several others. It was profoundly disheartening that differing positions around Cuba and other personal and organizational disputes disturbed the proceedings. It is unfortunate that the organizers did not call for discussion around principles of unity well before the meeting. In short, inadequate preparation resulted in a failed meeting. The online directory and website were discontinued in the first part of 2001. Probably all of those present in Vienna came away saddened that more could not have been accomplished.

On a more positive note, the 2004 Buenos Aires IFLA Conference provided a venue for progressive librarians from the Latin American and Caribbean region to discuss and formulate a declaration (recently translated into English).¹⁶ This meeting was titled the First Social Forum of Information, Documentation and Libraries: Alternative Action Programs from Latin America for a Knowledge-Based Society. It was organized by the Grupo de Estudios Sociales en Bibliotecología y Documentación (Social Studies Group in Librarianship and Documentation) from Argentina and the Circulo de Estudios sobre Bibliotecología Política y Social (The Study Circle on Political and Social Librarianship) from Mexico. The declaration is a short broad

¹⁴ Most of this section was adapted from the author’s “Living in the Real World: A Decade of Progressive Librarianship in the USA and in International Library Organizations,” *Innovation: A Journal for Appropriate Librarianship and Information Work in Southern Africa* no. 22 (June 2001): 10-19. This issue of *Innovation* is titled “Progressive Librarianship,” and includes articles about a number of the organizations mentioned here.

¹⁵ See <http://www.libr.org/PLG/>

¹⁶ See <http://www.inforosocial.org/declaration.html>

overview concerning principles that should underlie our work. It is notable that it stresses the need for peace, environmental justice, and the use of national and indigenous languages.

Note that of the nine organizations listed above, only one (SRRT) is an official body of a national library organization. This shows the need for more emphasis on socially responsible work within national library organizations worldwide.

IFLA History

Although various IFLA bodies may have addressed social justice issues in a limited way for some time, the year 1984 saw a breakthrough with the establishment of a core program called Advancement of Librarianship in the Third World (ALP), since last year now called Action for Development through Libraries Programme. ALP has worked hard and has been successful in getting grants for various projects, but it has not been able to adequately address the social justice nature of the information crisis and other pressing issues.

Librarianship exists within the world social context, as well as within the social structure of each individual country. The example of how IFLA failed to deal with apartheid South Africa is perhaps most instructive. In 1972 under pressure from a Unesco suspension, the IFLA Executive Board requested the South African Library Association to withdraw its membership from IFLA. South African IFLA members lost their voting rights in 1974. However, voting rights were restored in 1977 citing bogus changed conditions. By 1985, the IFLA Council passed a resolution demanding that apartheid members continue to be excluded. But even with continued pressure by an international group of IFLA members, and even a demonstration outside the IFLA Conference in 1990, this resolution was never implemented but rather subverted by various surveys and investigations. The resolution finally became moot after South Africa's first democratic election.

IFLA continued without any structures to address similar social justice issues through the late 1990s. Let me provide a few more examples. Although the large majority of US librarians attending the 1994 IFLA Havana conference signed a petition against the US boycott of Cuba, the IFLA Executive Board took no action. The 1995 Istanbul IFLA conference took place just after Pen International issued its annual report showing that Turkey had imprisoned more journalists than any other country. When two resolutions were developed to try to influence this situation during the conference, the then IFLA Executive Board pressured the movers to withdraw their resolutions, and succeeded in getting rid of one of them. Under intense pressure from the IFLA leadership, all mention of Turkey was deleted from the resolution eventually passed by the IFLA Council.

The 2000 IFLA Jerusalem conference was held just before the beginning of the second Intifada. People in Israel/Palestine were very tense wondering if negotiations would develop, if Palestine would declare independence, or if further rebellion would ensue. It soon became clear that the local conference organizers had excluded Palestinian librarians and that all the Arab countries were boycotting the conference and holding their own meeting in Cairo. The government of Israel used the conference to put forward its own political agenda, even welcoming the attendees

to “the unified capital of the State of Israel.” The keynote speaker turned out to be from Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A number of librarians protested in both public and private ways during the meeting and IFLA was presented with a statement from the National Conference of Palestinian Librarians calling for Unesco intervention to maintain the cultural identity of the city of Jerusalem. The IFLA Executive Board finally dissociated itself from the politics of the conference, but claimed this was beyond the control of the local organizing committee.

IFLA Social Responsibilities Discussion Group

Something clearly had to be done to make it possible for IFLA to address pressing issues. At the 1996 Beijing conference, a small group got together to discuss forming a Social Responsibilities Discussion Group (SRDG). This effort came to fruition at the 1997 Copenhagen conference where the body was established under the Section on Education and Training. It was decided to focus on “The growing gap between the information rich and the information poor, both between countries and within countries.” (FAIFE was established in 1997. Perhaps an article on its history could be developed for its tenth anniversary, but such a treatment is out of scope here.)

Six discussion papers were delivered by the SRDG at the 1998 Amsterdam meeting under the broad information gap theme (still available on the IFLANET). The topics were Rural Library Development (Kalpana Dasgupta), Literacy in Libraries (Josephine Andersen), Fees for Library Service (Kristine Abelsnes), Human Resource Development (Dennis Ocholla), The Electronic Information Gap (Al Kagan), and North-South Library Development (Ismail Abdullahi).

A composite paper including recommendations was delivered at the 1999 Bangkok conference. The paper was published not only on the IFLANET but also in IFLA Journal, and later in an IFLA monograph.¹⁷ The fourteen recommendations were strengthened and clarified at the 2000 Jerusalem conference and transmitted by the Section on Education and Training to the Division of Education and Research, which in turn sent the recommendations to the Professional Board. The recommendations were approved by the Board at its December 2000 meeting in The Hague. At the same time the Discussion Group applied for section status to carry on the work. However the IFLA Executive Board rejected that request at the 2001 Boston conference and instead advocated that the issues should be mainstreamed through the appropriate IFLA bodies. The recommendations were then slightly refined at the 2002 Glasgow conference, transmitted to the Governing Board, and approved by the IFLA Council. Just before the 2003 Berlin conference, the IFLA Governing Board forwarded the recommendation to seventeen IFLA bodies for their consideration and for possible action in developing their strategic plans. This author then advocated action in Berlin at the meetings of fifteen sections, the Regional Activities Division, and FAIFE.

¹⁷ In *Libraries in the Information Society*, ed. Tatiana V. Ershova and Yuri Hohlov, 39-46. Munchen: K. G. Saur, 2002. Originally published IFLA Journal 20, 1 (2000): 28-33, and <http://www.ifla.org/VII/dg/srdg/srdg7.htm>.

Here are the recommendations:

Rural Library Development

1. IFLA should develop a research program on rural library development in coordination with national library agencies. The focus should be on empowerment of local authorities to process information required by the community in comprehensible formats for diverse rural populations.

Literacy in Libraries

2. IFLA should urge library and information schools to promote adult basic education skills as a component of their curriculums.

3. IFLA should promote literacy training as a basic library service as advocated in the Unesco Public Library Manifesto.

Fees for Library Services

4. IFLA should take a strong position against fees for basic services broadly construed as advocated in the Unesco Public Library Manifesto.

5. IFLA should work with commercial information providers to establish a standard price structure for publicly supported libraries based on ability to pay.

Human Resource Development

6. IFLA should encourage library and information science schools to adopt a socially responsible orientation, including the promotion of a strong service ethic towards all population groups.

7. IFLA should research the education and training needs of Southern countries in conjunction with relevant agencies in order to facilitate the development of appropriate information curricula.

Electronic Information Gap

8. IFLA should promote the development of and assist in formatting local content for electronic resources.

9. IFLA should work with appropriate national and international bodies to promote policies and develop programs that equalize access to the Internet.

Library Cooperation

10. IFLA should promote greater resource sharing between the information rich and the information poor, including links to the information superhighway for equitable, adequate and reliable communications for all.

The Profession, Library Associations, and IFLA Structure

11. IFLA should advocate and develop strategies for the use of library associations to develop policies conducive to the development of information infrastructures for equitable, adequate and reliable communications for all.

12. IFLA should monitor and report on how various library associations are addressing information gap issues with a view to stimulating further work and activities.

13. IFLA should continue to work toward putting the concerns of Third World librarianship at the center of its program and activities.

It is much too soon to be able to evaluate the effects of the IFLA Social Responsibilities Discussion Group, but it is heartening to note that some IFLA bodies have taken this work seriously and have included some of the recommendations in their plans. Work has even begun on some of them. FAIFE is the most obvious example as described below. Furthermore, IFLA as a whole has now adopted a three-pillar approach to address “Society, Members, and Profession.” This new emphasis on Society appears to be a direct result of the work of the Discussion Group.

FAIFE and Social Responsibilities

The FAIFE Committee is discussing its strategic plan for the next three-year period. Social responsibilities will be explicitly mentioned, and will likely include the categories of empowerment for the poor, HIV/AIDS information, gender issues, access to the Internet, lifelong literacy, and government transparency to fight corruption. FAIFE also intends to send a mission to Israel/Palestine to assess freedom of expression issues. And FAIFE will need to address the poor freedom of expression situation in Tunisia, the venue of the next World Summit on the Information Society. The forthcoming FAIFE World Report will present new data on several of these topics.

In cooperation with the three IFLA regional sections and the Copyright and Other Legal Matters Committee, FAIFE will organize around HIV/AIDS information issues at both the 2006 conference in Seoul and the 2007 conference in Durban. For 2006, we are planning a panel that will include an overview of the disease and the information situation from a librarian at the World Health Organization, a paper on the situation in Thailand, a presentation on the gender power imbalance and HIV/AIDS transmission focusing on Africa, and a paper on the situation in Latin America. For 2007, we plan not only a panel but also a performance and a film. The panel will include an overview of the situation in Africa, a speaker from the main AIDS activist group in South Africa (the Treatment Action Campaign), a speaker on the intellectual property issues related to the pharmaceutical industry, and a speaker on information seeking behavior. We hope to show the award winning HIV/AIDS film, “Yesterday,” and to bring the most well-known and loved South African satirist/activist, Pieter-Dirk Uys, who is currently doing a show titled “Foreign AIDS.” We are also planning posters sessions at both conferences.

Recommendations for FAIFE

1. The SRRT organizational model suggests that it might be productive to form FAIFE subcommittees or working groups, to get more people involved with appropriate expertise. It also suggests that FAIFE might want to have some more formal representation on the IFLA Governing Board.
2. The limited success of the efforts to coordinate the national progressive library organizations suggests the need for further initiatives. It could be very productive to foster their participation within IFLA, possibly through a special dues category for small organizations in the richer countries.

3. In the current period of increasing conflict and war, civil society organizations have a special responsibility to do what they can to make our world a better place. FAIFE can fulfill this function for IFLA through bold initiatives.

Conclusion

We live in volatile times where inequality, violence, and prejudice of all kinds threaten the human community. When we as librarians do our job well, libraries serve as a resource for the entire community, a resource that can provide access to information and cultural materials to all, without distinction to class, gender, ethnic group, country of origin, citizenship status, or sexual orientation. Our materials and services can make a meaningful contribution to the people of our communities by promoting literacy, equalizing access to materials in all formats, advocating for human rights, preserving and promoting cultures, and by promoting intellectual freedom. Libraries can become true community centers.

Library associations can facilitate this role by educating and organizing librarians to advocate for justice. This article has highlighted the role of socially responsible librarianship within the American Library Associations and has noted the efforts of several other library groups. The history of IFLA's involvement in various issues has resulted in the formation of the Social Responsibilities Discussion Group and FAIFE, which is now struggling to meet its potential. It will be up to the IFLA association and institutional members as well as the IFLA Governing Board to nurture FAIFE and provide the necessary resources to expand its activities. We can help foster Sartre's call for "infinite unity" by taking brave actions. The ethics of our profession oblige us to do no less.

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