Library Theory and Research Section

PROJECT

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF IFLA IN PROMOTING CHANGE AND DIFFUSING PROFESSIONAL NORMS IN LIBRARIES WITH A WEIGHT ON NORMS; STANDARDS AND POLICIES RELATED TO LIFELONG LITERACY

I.   The general problems to be researched and the goals of the project.

This project has a twofold background and a twofold goal: 1) In general it is of great interest to investigate the impact of IFLA on spreading professional norms, standards and policies within worldwide librarianship. The yearly conferences of IFLA, gathering participants from all over the world and representing library practitioners as well as researchers and leaders and policy makers from library associations and state bodies, are probably unique. Few professions have institutionalised conferences of the same kind. Within most professional fields, conferences tend to have *either* academics, practitioners *or* leaders/politicians as their target group and the time span between the conferences tend to be longer than one year. Researching the impact which this unique institution has in having ideas and impulses diffused among the different sectors of the library and information field (e.g. between academics, practitioners and leaders/policy makers) and within librarianship world-wide, is a research question of general interest; it will contribute to our understanding of diffusion and change processes within our professional field and it is, simultaneously, a research project which can increase reflection and understanding within IFLA on the organisation's role in the world of librarianship and its potentials as well as limitations. 2) The second goal of the project is related to lifelong literacy. By focusing the project on standards, norms and policies related to promoting literacy, a key issue in IFLA's policy in the period to come, one will have to possibility of following diffusion and change processes within a limited area from the very start of a professional project, thus studying how ideas, norms and policies develop and how they are translated into, adapted to and implemented (or not implemented) in different context. From a research point of view, following such a process from the start provides us with a laboratory for tracing diffusion processes and the impact of IFLA which are very promising. Such a focus will at the same time strengthen the research-based underpinnings of IFLA's policies and practice in this area. From a practical point of view, that is an advantage.

Some of the sub questions that will be investigated are:
1. How is literacy defined? Many languages do not have words exactly matching the uses of literacy in English, e.g. "information literacy", "computer literacy", "cultural literacy" etc ". When the term is defined and specified and policies to promote literacy are formulated in different contexts – to what extent are we talking of the same concept? Which role do different "literacies", e.g. information literacy, play within the broader concept? An international organisation such as IFLA can play a key-role in

having a relatively unified definition and understanding of the concept diffused. To what extent is that the case?

2. How do different groups such as practitioners in different kinds of library and information organisations, policy makers, researchers etc. conceive the concept and challenges related to information literacy? Can an organisation such as IFLA stimulate the dialogue between these groups that probably is necessary for an efficient implementation of policies to promote information literacy?

3. Study measures and policies related to promoting information literacy for specific groups (e. cultural minorities and immigrants, children, students on different levels etc.) in order to: a) Alanalyse the efficicency of different measures and policies in different settings; b) Trace the history and "travel route" of different policies and measures. To what extent does IFLA represent a starting point or a station on that travel route?

4. What is the role that actors of different kinds and in different contexts see that IFLA can play in promoting information literacy?

II.   Methodology and design of the project

An international research group will be set up, based on the members in the Standing Committee on LTR. The group will be composed to cover all continents and countries differing in culture, economic, social and political situation.

The project will base itself upon methodological triangulation, using quantitative as well as qualitative methods. A survey will be undertaken among a representative sample of delegates to IFLA 2003. This survey will be repeated in 2004. The questionnaire which will try to catch the 4 research questions specified above, will be developed by an international group of researchers headed by the project leader in late 2003, and distributed to the first sample (2003-delegates) early in 2004.

In addition, qualitative interviews will be undertaken in a selection of countries representing different parts of the world and different stages of economic development, in order to get a more profound understanding of the research questions. The qualitative interviews will be undertaken according to a common interview-guide.

The time plan is as follows:
August-November 2003: Develop questionnaire for quantitative survey
November-February 2003/2004: Quantitative data-collection 1
March-August 2004: Development of qualitative interview guide
August 2004: Presenting draft in the Section's business meeting
September-December 2004: Qualitative interviews
January- March 2005: Quantitative data-collection 2
March-August 2005: Analysis and reporting
August 2005: Seminar/workshop at IFLA 2005 in Oslo, based on the project
September-December 2005: Further analysis, including findings of the seminar
January-May 2006: Reporting in IFLA-Publication

III.   Publication and dissemination of results

The goal is to have the results of the project published as a book. In addition, articles will be produced for professional journals and papers will be presented at IFLA-conferences.

IV.   The research group

A research group with broad participation from America, Asia, Europe and Africa will be set up during the IFLA 2004-conference. During the conference this group will work in order to refine and adapt the research design, interview guide and questionnaire.

V. Data-collection and design of the study

The data will consist of A) A qualitative part B)a quantitative survey. The quantitative survey will be undertaken with a representative sample of the participants at the BA conference and and the Berlin conference, e.g. every fifth or every tenth participant randomly selected.
As far as possible we should aim at organising a research group in a way that will make it possible to have qualitative data and from all parts of the world, i.e:

Africa
- North-Africa
- Central Africa
- West-Africa
- East Africa

ASIA
- Japan
- China
- South-East Asia
- India

AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND

EUROPE
- Central Europe
- Eastern Europe
- Southern Europe
- Northern Europe and Scandinavia
- UK

AMERICA
- US and Canada
- Central America
- South America

The goal is to have at least one country report from the 17 regions specified above.
The group of respondents forming the basis for the different regional/national reports should consist of:
- Respondents with a background from practical librarianship, representing different kinds of libraries, i.e. public libraries and special libraries
- Respondents with a background from governing bodies/political bodies responsible for formulating and implementing national library policies.
- Respondents with a background from library associations
- Representatives with a background from LIS-education and research

That probably means that the country reports should be based on not less than 15 interviews to cover the categories and variables of interest.
The qualitative interviews will be undertaken as individual interviews or in the form of focus group interviews. That is up to those responsible for the national interviews and reports to decide.

See Annex for Interview Guide

STATUS REPORT October 2004

1.   A methodological approach and a measurement instrument for the qualitative part of the study have been developed.
2.   A research group is about being set up. So far the group has members from four European countries, two African, Australia and the USA. The group will be expanded.
3.   Qualitative data-collection will be completed during the winter of 2004/2005.
4.   In parallel, a questionnaire for the quantitative part of the survey is about being developed and undertaken during the spring of 2005.
The time plan and the plan for disseminating and publishing the results are as follows:
The time plan is as follows:
August 2004: Establishing the international research team
August - October 2004: Develop questionnaire for quantitative survey
November - February 2004/2005 : Quantitative data-collection August 2004 : Development of qualitative interview guide
September - December 2004: Qualitative interviews
January – May 2005: National reports based on the qualitative data
February-May : Producing the report based on the quantitative data.
August 2005: Seminar/workshop at IFLA 2005 in Oslo based on the project.
End 2005: IFLA-publication on Findings

I. Publication and dissemination of results
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Ragnar Audunson, Member standing committee LTR

CALL FOR PAPERS, Seoul 2006

"The role of IFLA in diffusing professional norms and standards"
The Standing Committee of the IFLA Library Theory and Research Section is
undertaking a project aiming at eliciting the role of IFLA in promoting professional
norms and standards in general and norms and standards related to information
literacy in particular.
Results will be presented at an LTR session in Seoul, and for this session we would
like to have national and regional reports on this topic from different parts of the world
where we so far do not have partners, e.g. Latin America. Asia, East Africa, West
Africa and Southern Africa and Russia.

Reports can be based upon :
- qualitative interviews undertaken according to the attached interview guide (**English** and
  French version - the interview guide is about being translated in Russian and Spanish),
- quantitative surveys developed on the basis of the attached guide or other kinds of data
  deemed relevant, e.g. document analysis.

If you want to contribute to this project please express your interest as soon as
possible to the project leader:

Ragnar Audunson
(Chair, Library Theory and Research Section)
E-mail: Ragnar.Audunson@jbi.hio.no

Please indicate what kind of empirical investigation you would like to undertake
(qualitative interviews, survey or document analysis) before the 1st of March 2006.

ANNEX
INTERVIEW GUIDE

LTR-PROJECT: IFLA's ROLE IN DIFFUSING PROFESSIONAL NORMS

The group of respondents forming the basis for the different regional/national reports should consist of:

- Respondents with a background from practical librarianship, representing different kinds of libraries, i.e. public libraries and special libraries
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- Respondents with a background from library associations
- Representatives with a background from LIS-education and research

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Qualitative interviews – interview guide.

1. Background information on the respondents and his/her relationship to and experiences with IFLA

1.First we would like you to say some words about your background: What is your present position?

- What kind of library or library-related institution do you work in?
- What is your main responsibility in this institution?

2. Are you an experienced IFLA participant or would you describe yourself as a novice – I mean: How many conferences have you participated at?

3. Are you a member or an officer of any body in IFLA, i.e. a standing committee, round-table, division etc? If yes: What kind of position do you have in which body?

4. What would you say that you personally gain as a library and information professional from taking part in the IFLA activities? Try to be as concrete and specific as possible. Can you, for example, point at professional ideas, standards, methods etc. which have been important in your professional life and where IFLA-activities have played a role as a source of inspiration?
Some time has passed since the 70th IFLA conference in BA. Could you reflect a bit on the effects of that conference on you as a professional? When looking back at what you experienced

The general effects of IFLA in spreading in spreading professional norms and standards and in developing librarianship.

4. Every year 3-4000 library and information professionals meet at the IFLA-conferences. Considerable resources are spent which, alternatively, could have been used for other purposes, for example concrete literacy projects etc. If someone maintains that the millions of dollars spent on the yearly IFLA-conferences better could be used alternatively, how would you meet such an argument? What, if anything, does the library community in general and the library community in your country in particular according to your opinion gain from IFLA and IFLA-activities that can defend the resources spent?

5. As professionals we get professional impulses from a variety of sources, e.g. research in LIS, national and international networks of which we are members, professional journals, others bur related professional and academic field, seminars, further educational courses, exemplary and innovative libraries nationally and abroad, national governing bodies and policy organs etc. IFLA is one possible source of professional inspiration.

- How do you, generally, evaluate, IFLA as a source of professional impulses and inspiration compared to other sources? Is IFLA and important source of professional impulses compared to the other mentioned or a relatively marginal one?
- Could you reflect a bit on what kind of impulses IFLA is particularly capable of diffusing, e.g. concrete ideas concerning service production, the role and purpose of librarianship, methods and techniques in management, new professional trends such as Knowledge Management, standards in classification and cataloguing etc.

6. Can you identify new ideas, services, methods, techniques etc. that have been implemented in your country over the last decade that can be traced back to IFLA or where IFLA has played a significant role in diffusing the innovation or idea in question? If yes, specify the kind of innovation(s) or idea(s) and he role that you think can be ascribed to IFLA..

IFLA and (information) literacy

7. Information literacy is a complex concept. We would like you to elaborate what you believe to be the most important dimensions of this concept.

8. Which dimensions of this complex concept do you think IFLA should give priority in the organisation's work to promote lifelong literacy? Are there specific dimensions of this problem-area which you regard IFLA as particularly capable of working with and where, accordingly, IFLA can be an efficient instrument?

9. Obstacles to information literacy are many. They consist, among oher things of literacy in the narrow sense, i.e. the lack of reading and writing capability, lack of access to technology – ICT or printed material, lack of ability to understand a message, lack of access to relevant and understandable content, lack of the ability to identify, select and evaluate information, lack of access to a supportive and stimulating environment etc. -----

- Which are, according to your opinion, the most important hindrances to life long literacy in your country?

- Which role could IFLA play in overcoming those barriers and hindrances?

10. Many issues in information policy are conflict ridden. Groups representing different interests or values oppose each other. The issue of copyright versus open access is one example. Free borrowing versus fee is another. What about the issue of literacy? Is that also conflict ridden, or is it an issue or is it an issue where all parties can agree and join forces for the sake of a common good? If you see conflicts, please specify what kind of interests and values which according to your opinion are standin against each other.

Should IFLA take a stand in these conflicts, or should IFLA focus upon those parts of the issue that are not conflict ridden or try to be as neutral as possible?

11. Many institutions and organisations, international as well as regional and national, are working in order to promote information literacy, for example. How do you evaluate the role of IFLA?

- Is the role of IFLA a major one or a more marginal one compared to other organisations and institutions?
- Does IFLA has a specific role to play that would not have been covered properly had not IFLA been there, or is the role of IFLA to add strength to a common choir without having a specific role to play which is different from other participant. If you believe IFLA has a specific role to play, we would like you to elaborate a little on that.

12. Are there any other questions or topics concerning IFLA and information literacy that you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your cooperation.