



IFLA Libraries for the Blind Section

Best IFLA Newsletter 2000 and 2001

Newsletter

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Section News:

Standing Committee meeting, IFLA Oslo Conference 2005

A packed agenda led to establishment of a third meeting date, so the section met in Oslo on the 13th, 17th, and 19th of August. Among the highlights of the meetings were:

Beatrice Christensen Sköld welcomed new members Courtney Deines-Jones, Margaret McGrory, Luc Maumet, Misako Nomura and Pete Osborne. She also thanked retiring/exiting members Ku Jo Bee, Francisco Martinez Calvo, Barbara Mates, Marie Cécile Robin and Henri Chauchat.

Johann Roos, South African Library for the Blind, Grahamstown, South Africa. was approved as chair of the SC. Helen Brazier, National Library for the Blind, Stockport, UK, agreed to stay on and was approved as Secretary/Treasurer.

Morayo Atinmo gave a summary of her 2003 Ulverscroft award-winning project examining the availability of books in accessible format in Nigeria. The SC commended her on her work and agreed that the incoming Chair would write to the National Library of Nigeria enclosing the project report to seek their support, possibly on a similar model to Kenya where books in accessible formats are distributed through public libraries. Johan Roos and Dick Tucker will work with Morayo Atinmo to find a way forward.

The SC received reports from Wendy Ling and Sarah Home about their recent Ulverscroft-sponsored visits to NLB, UK and the CNIB, respectively.

Tour of Norway's National Library for the Blind

The meeting on Wednesday the 17th followed a tour of Norway's new National Library for the Blind (NLB) operations center. Section members were introduced to NLB personnel, who described their operational responsibilities and gave insight into the nature of the patrons served by the NLB. Of particular interest was NLB's one-time-use policy, whereby new copies of audio books are burned to CD upon patron request, and returned CDs are disposed of after check-in. The NLB team fielded questions on copyright, reader request queues, cost-effectiveness, and environmental concerns.

Section Session: Achieving inclusion through partnership

A substantial and very interested group of participants attended Thursday's session. The session began with Johan Roos describing difficulties collaborating in his country because of the disparities among various organizations responsible for service delivery in "The three tiers of government and the many tears of librarians: library and information services for people with print disabilities in South Africa." This theme was echoed later in the program in the

presentation “Charity, charges and chaos: the story of library services for visually impaired people in the UK” presented by Helen Brazier.

In her paper, “Services for the blind in the public libraries of Vietnam: making Vietnamese public libraries more accessible to visually impaired people”, Nguyen Thi Bac of the General Sciences Library, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam described the success of collaborative efforts among non-profits and the government to expanding services to people with print disabilities and the work still to be done to reach all Vietnamese citizens who have visual impairments.

Margaret McGrory of the CNIB Library, Toronto, Canada outlined the successes of the “Visunet Canada Partners Program: a partnership offered by the CNIB Library to libraries and library consortia in Canada to extend their services to members of their communities who are unable to read and print,” providing insight into how collaborations had proven beneficial in her country.

The paper “Public library as an agent of a Braille library” by Keun Hae Youk, Korean Braille Library, Seoul, Korea, discussed ways in which library collaborations could be used to increase access to Braille materials and to expand library services for people with various types of print disabilities.

Ingar Beckman Hirschfeldt of the Swedish Library of Talking Books and Braille, Enskede, Sweden painted a portrait of a system in which collaborations have led to an extremely successful program to get services and materials to patrons with print disabilities in “Library services for all: the Swedish way.”

And Alex Byrne of the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia, presented a warm discussing on the importance of providing excellent services to all in “Advancing Library Services for the blind in the global information society.” The SC later nominated this paper for publication in *IFLA Journal*.

Questions and answers focused on tips and techniques for improving collaborations and expanding services to people with print disabilities, especially in public library settings.

Division III Reception

SC members participated in a reception for Division III members, hosted by Torny Kjekstad and held at the Bekkestra Public Library, where she is director, in that Oslo suburb. Following a presentation on the library’s history and accomplishments, attendees were able to tour the library while treating themselves to a sumptuous buffet topped off by an astonishing array of homemade Norwegian desserts.

Courtney Deines-Jones

Satellite Meeting in Sweden

The section held its satellite meeting in Göteborg (Gothenburg) in Western Sweden , on August 10-12th. A co-arrangement with IFLA Libraries serving Disadvantaged Section and the Regional Library of Western Sweden, the satellite meeting attracted 100 participants.

Presentations from Librarians from public and academic Libraries in the region informed the audience of the integrated services for persons with a print disability.

From 1986 all lending of talking books became an integrated part of the public library services. TPB (Swedish Library of talking books and Braille) is a national production and information centre which provides services to other libraries including Braille.

Prior to 1986, the Public Libraries supplied talking books to their vision impaired patrons. From 1979, other print disabled patrons were able to borrow talking books after an agreement was reached with copyright holders.

All the Libraries that gave presentations at the meeting have work- stations with various devices such as speech synthesizers, enlargement programmes, Braille displays, etc. Each library, has an assistant who helps the clients with their internet and database searches.

Academic Libraries took full responsibility for the services to disabled students in 2003. TBP still produces the text books in alternate formats for print disabled students. Those University Libraries that have special permits from the Government are able to download Daisy books from TPB's digital archive. Almost all Academic Libraries are issued with such a permit.

The second day was dedicated to common issues such as copyright and accessible on-line catalogues. David Mann, RNIB reported that WIPO had formulated a standard, making exceptions for visually impaired persons, which they recommend governments in developing countries include in their copyright laws.

Ingar Beckman Hirschfeldt, Executive Director of TPB, gave a short overview of the new Swedish copyright law which is more generous than the previous law of 1960. The new law states that anyone can make a text accessible to a person with a disability. The accessible text can be in large print, Braille or electronic form. The law does not include sound narrations, i.e talking books. In order to produce talking books, you have to obtain a special permit from the Government. Johan Roos, South African Libraries for the Blind expressed his concern regarding the interpretation of the new national copyright law which seem to be a

hindrance to the dream of the Global Library by not allowing file exchanges between Libraries for the Blind. He also reminded the audience of the fact that libraries can still exchange physical copies of books and that Libraries should continue doing that.

Marian Osting from the Dutch Federation of Libraries for the Blind presented the web portal www.anderslezen.nl where the clients can obtain information, borrow books and read newspapers. Minna Von Zansen gave a short presentation of Celia.net, the online catalogue of the Celia Library for the visually impaired in Finland. Professor Morayo Atinmo, presented her project where she had made an inventory of all special format material in Nigeria as well as the creation of an on-line catalogue for title searches. There are very few books in special formats in Nigeria but most of them are out –of – date text books and gifts from abroad. Professor Atinmo's project has been financed by a grant from the Ulverscroft Foundation.

Finally, Ingar Beckman Hirschfeldt looked at the future of Libraries for the Blind. In her vision, The Library for the Blind will become a National Centre with expertise that can help libraries, publishers etc... to make information and literature accessible to print disabled persons and develop new accessible media. The Library service should be included in mainstream public and academic libraries.

On the last day of the satellite meeting, participants visited several libraries in the region as well as the Public Library in Göteborg and two academic libraries.

Some Reflections on the Section and its Performance

IFLA headquarters recently required sections to assess themselves. This enables IFLA to establish which sections work well and whether their work is relevant to IFLA's professional priorities. It also presents a section with a very valuable mirror in which to look at itself. In our section's case the results of the evaluation were particularly gratifying.

Throughout the last five years we have had between 79 and 86 members. No doubt sometimes members do not renew their subscription because of budgetary constraints. But membership of the Section is valuable. Apart from the contact between peers which enables us to assess our own progress and to gather information, we are able to speak for ourselves with conviction if there is strength in our numbers; and we can speak for others if they need our help.

The Section's scholarly contribution to IFLA's activities is impressive. From 2001 the Section has each year presented (either by itself or in collaboration with others) a public programme at IFLA main conferences and no fewer than eighteen of the 24 papers presented in those programmes are available on

IFLANET. During the same period we have held three successful pre-conferences. Two of the Section's publications have been published as IFLA Professional Report 75 and 86, two conference papers have been published in the IFLA Journal while a third has been recommended for publication in it. At present yet another of the Section's publications is likely to appear as an IFLA Professional Report. The Section operates by itself but it often collaborates with other Sections, most notably Public Libraries and Libraries Serving Disadvantaged Persons. And in addition to its scholarly activities, the Section has in recent years contributed to workshops and other activities in developing countries. It seeks, where possible, to interact with those communities from which libraries for the blind draw their constituencies and it has most recently done so by participating by way of an exhibition and a workshop at the Sixth General Assembly of the World Blind Union in Cape Town, South Africa, at the end of last year.

The Section has also raised funds to facilitate no fewer than five visits by library and production staff to other libraries as well as an organisational project which is expected to benefit a developing country enormously.

In addition to the production of scholarly papers, Section publications and journal publications, the Section is also engaged in research which is aimed at benchmarking performance for libraries for the blind. It is also in the process of seeking funding for a further research project dealing with libraries for the blind funding models. It is participating with the World Blind Union in work aimed at securing continued free post of literature for the blind internationally, while it is also gathering information on national postal arrangements regarding such materials. It also collaborates closely with the World Blind Union and WIPO on copyright matters which are of immense concern to all libraries for the blind. A campaign in countries which have not as yet enacted statutory exceptions to copyright protection for the benefit of people with print-disabilities is currently being planned. The Section also collaborates closely with the DAISY Consortium on a variety of issues intended to promote the idea of a global library for the blind which, at the very least, should be characterised by less duplication of work through joint collection development, better access for readers to the catalogues of other libraries, firm interlending arrangements and, in the result, more books for our patrons to borrow with greater ease. Other collaborative work with the DAISY Consortium and the World Blind Union concerns the development of best practices with regard to access to publishers' files.

From its latest strategic planning documents it is clear that the Section's work focuses not on blind readers only. Its members feel very strongly that their work should benefit all readers with print-disabilities.

From the work of the Section and from its publications it is apparent that the leading libraries for the blind are staffed by professionals who take their work and

the cause of access to information for all, very seriously. The Section therefore offers an ideal forum for those professionals to collaborate towards the achievement of that goal. And it offers the best possible arena for people with that common interest to be inspired by and to learn from their peers. If you would like to work in pursuit of those goals, the Section offers you the ideal place and opportunity to do so.

Johan Roos

DAISY Library of The Year

The Swedish Library of Talking Books, TPB has established a new award " *Best DAISY Library of the Year* ". The First winner is the City Library of Göteborg (Gothenburg). The award consisted of a new DAISY player, The Telex Professor. The prize was presented at the annual Book & Library Fair in Göteborg on 29th September.

The Jury's statement: " for the positive and persistent will to renewal and change that characterizes the libraries work when offering DAISY services to it's borrowers, as well as taking an active role in the development of DAISY."

The second and third prizes went to the Public Library of Lerum and the University Library of Umeå respectively who each received a Diploma.

Ulverscroft Awards 2006

Following on from the very successful Ulverscroft/IFLA Libraries for the Blind Best Practice Awards in 2004/5, the Ulverscroft Foundation has decided to make a further 20,000 GB Pounds available to renew the Awards in 2006.

Based upon operating the scheme in 2004 and 2005 the Ulverscroft Foundation and IFLA LBS are reviewing how best to allocate the funding in 2006 and further details will be circulated as soon as they are available.

Council Resolution: Accessibility for Print Disabled Persons

IFLA has two Sections, Libraries for the Blind and Libraries Serving Disadvantaged Persons, dealing with accessibility problems both in regard to formats and physical accessibility of libraries. Among the members of the Libraries for the Blind Section are people with a print impairment. Today these members can access very little of the content of IFLA's Website and IFLA's publications.

We would also remind IFLA that among its members there are many organisations with this special competence, who could help and give advice to make IFLA information accessible for all.

Text of resolution:

Council urges IFLA's Governing Board from now on to make all IFLA information and publications as well as the website accessible for print impaired people.

New Publication:

Designing and Building Integrated Digital Library Systems- Guidelines.

By Bente Dahl Rathje, Margaret McGrory, Carol Pollitt, Paivi Voutilainen under the auspices of the IFLA Libraries for the Blind Section, The Hague, IFLA HQ, 2005- 67 p. 30 cm- (IFLA professional Report: 90)
ISBN 9077897054

The guidelines provide libraries for the blind with a broad overview of matters to be considered in planning and implementing an integrated digital library system. While the publication was prepared for libraries for the blind, apart from content dealing with accessibility and copyright related legal matters which are particularly relevant to libraries serving print-disabled populations, the Guidelines can be used by any library seeking information about what to consider when implementing an integrated digital library system.

For more information on ordering these guidelines:
<http://www.ifla.org/V/pr/index.htm>

To the Directors of Libraries for the Blind.

Dear Director,

Undoubtedly your library is making every effort to provide books in alternative formats to blind and print-impaired readers.

Your library may also be one of those contributing to charitable actions to provide Braille books to developing countries.

This letter is to ask you stop doing this in the way that you have been and to save both your library and the recipients a considerable amount of wasted money.

I am writing to you in my own name, not on behalf of any institution.

Having spent several years working with libraries for the blind in developing countries I feel that it is now necessary to ask you to stop sending your old Braille books to these libraries. No doubt the gift of books that are no longer needed makes people feel that in giving they are doing good. The reality is otherwise.

Throughout the developing countries there are libraries for the blind which have used up valuable portions of their meagre budgets putting up shelves to display large collections of beautifully bound volumes of donated books, most of which are useless. These are kept just in case the donor arrives and are used to show visiting politicians.

It might be argued that when Braille readers have nothing to read, then any book is of use. This might be the case if there were only a few books, but not when large donations of unwanted books arrive from the rich countries. While the motives for such donations may be admirable, there is something wrong when a large container is loaded to the door with Braille books for Africa, only to reveal when unloaded that not only was there no list of contents but also that it contained 35 copies of an outdated Wisden's Cricket Annual and 17 copies of Cooking for a Vegetarian Christmas. To my mind the real clincher was the Braille edition of the UK Government's instructions to elderly people on how to keep warm in winter. This has little value in equatorial Africa.

There are examples one can provide from other countries; the 1979 edition of The Guide to Tipping in New York which is on the shelf in a library for the blind in Lagos, or the 1986 edition of the top hitters from the national baseball league in a library in St Petersburg. Neither of these had been read. I checked.

I have found dust covered editions of French classical literature in cupboards in workshops in the rain forest when what they wanted were books on education and agriculture. It might be argued that the relevance and the content are not important if there is nothing else to read. But the content is essential. Would you study social science using only books that are thirty years old? Would you learn to read German using "Mein Kampf"? That last example is too extreme but I am sure that you appreciate my meaning.

If you send books to libraries which have very little they will of course accept them and send you their grateful thanks. They can hardly do otherwise. They might privately express views about the cost of running a library that they do not need and their fear of throwing the books away. But they will not bite the hand that feeds them.

May I therefore suggest that the next time someone suggest that you donate your unwanted volumes to some needy country, you resist the suggestion? Take the time and effort to look at the available books. Reject those that clearly have no relevance to the situation to which they are to be offered. Then make a list of the available titles (extracted from your own catalogue this should not take too long). Send this list to the intended recipient and ask them to mark those books that they would like. Now there is gift of books that are relevant and wanted. This will cost you more time and money than simply sticking the books in a container. It will not change the cost levels of well intentioned organisations like Rotary, the

Lions or the many women's organisations that go to great lengths to raise the money for the transport. It will considerably reduce the amount of money that is being wasted by libraries that can ill afford to cope with the dumping of unwanted Braille books.

Thank you for taking the time to read this plea. It is based on real and frequent experience of seeing organisations struggling to get the right materials to their readers being pressured into wasting money by well intentioned actions from the developed countries.

Please take the time and trouble to help these libraries. They will be eternally grateful and you will have helped many blind and visually impaired people to learn something useful.

Yours sincerely

Richard N Tucker
The Hague
The Netherlands
July 2005.

Reminder:

International Directory of Libraries for the Blind

Please update your library information via internet. <http://ifla.jsrpd.jp/>

If you have not registered , you can register your library/institution at the above internet address.

For more information contact:

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