



## Reference and Information Services Section

### MINUTES

Standing Committee Midwinter Meeting  
UNESCO, Place Fontenoy  
Paris, France

March 3, 2006  
10.00 – 17.00

March 4, 2006  
Library visits  
Biblioteque Nationale de France and BPI

Minutes prepared by Sarah Barbara Watstein and reviewed by Marty Kesselman

**Present:** Concha Lois Cabello, Amanda Duffy, Beth Fisher, Birgitta Fogelvik, Franceen Gaudet (via phone), Gunilla Hakli, Francis Kirkwood, Marty Kesselman, Annsophie Oscarsson (Chair), Raymond-Josue Seckel, Isabel Sterling, Petra van den Born, Sarah Barbara Watstein, Bodil Wohnert

**Absent:** Catherine Wojewodzki, Valentina Comba, Jieyin Feng

**Resignations:** Diane Nester Kresh, Uwe Schwersky

### Welcome and introductions

A warm welcome was extended to the group by Petra, and acknowledgements of planning extended to Raymond and Petra.

### Agenda

The agenda included discussion of minutes from Oslo; Seoul programmes, planning of activities regarding approved Action Plan 2006-2007, VRD and IFLA (with further information from Francine), and other business, including updates on various initiatives.

### Roster revisions

The roster was routed for changes. Annsophie will update and post. Those absent should email changes to Annsophie.

**Website** <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s36/index.htm>

Changes to the Website since the last conference were noted. The website has been “absolutely updated” as of February 2006.

### **Oslo Minutes and Discussion (Section review, IFLA structure, etc.)**

Minutes from Oslo 2005 submitted by Marty Kesselman were reviewed, with particular focus on checking duties to see if everything is running as planned.

Annsophie noted that the section review will be discussed the following week by the PC at The Hague. She also noted that the whole new structure of IFLA will also be discussed. Marty suggested that the Standing Committee might want to make comments on the new structure as a group. It was noted that the foundational documents were sent to officers only and emphasized that how we are going to move as a Section is impacted by how IFLA will be organized and move. Several questions were raised, including is the Section structure appropriate? Might a flatter structure be better? For example currently we are in a different section from many of the standing committees we might dovetail with such as the Information Literacy section or some of the different types of libraries groups - - public libraries, special libraries, etc.? Does the current structure of discussion groups as temporary groups that will transform into sections work? It was noted that when a discussion group becomes a section, there is fallout, including the fact that members miss out on some of the up-to-the-minute discussions that existed with more informal discussion group formats. Marty raised concerns that IFLA has become more inflexible. Annsophie commented that we don't know the content of other section reviews, and that it may, therefore, not be possible to speak to the issues. Others agreed that it was difficult to discuss something they had not yet read. Isabel asked if there was anything up on the website as far as what some of these changes are; Annsophie noted not yet. Discussions appear to be at the upper level, and have not yet filtered down. Finally it was noted that Seoul 2006 will mark five years since the current IFLA statutes came into effect. (For the Statutes, see <http://www.ifla.org/III/statute.htm>)

With regard to the minutes, Francis noted that the Standing Committee's discussion of the world information society conference in Addis Ababa in March<sup>1[1]</sup> was not reflected in the minutes from Oslo. He also recalled that in Oslo we discussed having democracy building as part of our section's strategic plan. Several members noted that they didn't recall anything about a conference. Francis noted the negative impact of what he perceived to be the lack of full discussion and reporting on this matter. FAIFE - - Committee on Free Access to Information and Expression of IFLA and Government Information and Official Publications Section (GIOPS) of IFLA will proceed with the conference without our formal support etc.

### **Financial report**

Marty has prepared and submitted the Section's financial report. He reminded the group that funding is now held at IFLA headquarters, and raised the issue of gifts for the speakers at our upcoming open session. Marty offered to buy the presents. Additional upcoming expenses include paying someone to translate several of our foundational documents into (e.g. brochure, guidelines, standards etc.) into Korean or Japanese. It was noted that our dissemination of our newsletter does not incur costs; the newsletter is printed electronically, and print copies are only sent to those we are required to send paper copies. Franceen volunteered to translate the newsletter and to translate the brochure into Korean and Chinese. Marty noted that he does not think it appropriate for Section members to charge for personal services, such as translation, and a discussion of ethics ensued. Annsophie noted that translation is a different type of service than others. Several members present noted that

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<sup>1[1]</sup> WSIS Follow-up Conference on Access to Information and Knowledge for Development, United Nations Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, March 27-30, 2006

at issue is when something is done out of professional commitment vs. expertise. Marty suggested we ask IFLA for guidance. Petra reminded the group that our budget is limited anyway. Annsofie noted that we could ask IFLA for extra money for translations. Marty offered to inquire and report back.

### **Information Officers**

Newsletter content: Sarah noted that Cathy wants us to send her items for the newsletter. Annsofie will send a "Note from the Chair;" this piece will be accompanied by a photo, as it was last July.

A suggestion was made that Francis include in the upcoming newsletter another piece on "How do you say Reference Service in your language." Francis' article in the July 2005 Newsletter was intended to inspire a series of short case studies in the Newsletter from different national, linguistic and cultural background. Francis noted that the goal is to "obtain over time a better world-wide understanding of the reference profession and to promote broader, more inclusive standards for IFLA in this field." The group agreed that we should continue to include a piece on this topic in the next newsletter. Marty offered to ask someone to respond. One suggestion was to ask Standing Committee member Jieyin Feng to respond. Bodil noted that we have chosen a paper or a presentation from someone in Korea for the upcoming programme, and that we could ask this speaker to write the column.

Brochure: We agreed that the Section brochure needs to be reviewed to ascertain if revisions are needed. At a minimum, the brochure needs to reflect name changes and our logo. A copy of the brochure was circulated for comments and suggestions. Sarah will take draft with suggestions back to Cathy.

### **Updates: Reference Toolkit for Librarians in Developing Countries** <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s36/index.htm>

Marty noted that the database is all set up and that content is being input. The toolkit will be available from the Reference and Information Services Section's website within the next couple of months. There had been problems with a server at Rutgers but those issues have been rectified. Marty will work with IFLA regarding the transfer of the database from the Rutgers server to IFLANET. A poster highlighting the elements of the toolkit was presented by Marty and Sarah in Oslo.

### **Updates: Survey of Reference Services**

Bodil's survey has not yet been posted to IFLANet. Bodil will follow-up with Cathy as to making the survey available from our pages on IFLANET.

### **Updates: Listservs**

The Section currently supports two lists - -

**IFLAREF:** [Discussion list about international reference and information issues](#)

**REFSC-L:** [Standing Committee Members List](#)

At issue is whether or not we need two, the discussion list and the Standing Committee members list. There was a lively discussion of the value of two lists and on the underlying value driving list creation and maintenance, such as transparency. Members noted the importance of two lists with one for Section business (limited to Standing Committee members) and one for Section activities, news, etc. The latter would be "informational" in

purpose and scope. Some members expressed concern about having an inactive list and the message that sends to our members and others. Another issue is access - - should the Standing Committee list, for example, include past and/or corresponding Standing Committee members? Isabel noted that many sections use the general IFLA listserv for mailings, and asked if that might fulfill the need(s) we envision for the general Section list. Beth expressed concern about wide distribution of business matters, noting the ease with which information can be forwarded in today's information environs. Annsophie expressed her feeling that it is practical to have a closed list for Standing Committee business and noted that, like others, she is less convinced about whether or not we need another kind of list. Bodil commented that IFLA needs to review all the lists and provide a new structure for both governance and communication. A show of hands was taken and it was decided that current Standing Committee members only would have access to **REFSC-L**; members were asked to update their email addresses etc. Instead of a special information list on section activities, we will regularly post information on various international listservs such as IFLANET, LibRef-L, DigRef-L, etc.

A suggestion was made that we post a survey on the listserv to ascertain interest in section members socializing at the conference.

### **Membership and Standing Committee Terms**

Vacancies on the Standing Committee were noted. Discussion of term length, term overlap and appointment process followed. Francis expressed concern about a lack of staggered terms; other concerns included concern about filling out terms (being co-opted) vs. appointment via the nomination process; continuity vs. change; and the need for new (vs. old) blood. Marty noted that he believes this will happen naturally. Almost everyone needs to be nominated by 2007 and there is a strong likelihood of new members being nominated in addition to continuing members. We have had several people leave the section so we will be having some turnover during the biennial nomination/election process.

Discussion about co-opting someone from South Africa was held; Annsophie noted that she has done some legwork towards this. Co-opting someone now would mean that this member would serve for two years, until 2007, the next official election. Amanda noted that one of our Seoul speakers is from Kenya and suggested that we consider approaching her to ascertain interest. Francis pointed out that this discussion illustrated the challenges inherent in our two year vs. four year cycle.

### **Selection of paper for IFLA Journal**

Bodil has forwarded the Section's selected paper (by Kirsti Nielsen) for the IFLA journal. A question was raised as to whether IFLA is planning to drop the print version of this publication. No one had heard any discussion of this. It was noted that given dropping the print version might be complicated by the very fact that IFLA is a global organization and therefore "mandated" to broad reach

### **Virtual Reference Desk Conference**

Franceen reported that the issue of the Virtual Reference Desk conference remains "in the throes of discussion." At issue is whether or not to continue having the physical conference. Franceen reported that there will not be a physical conference in 2006, but that some sort of a "bridge" will be provided in 2006 for those persons who are used to attending the physical conference. Trailing issues include sponsorship, location, necessary training and expertise (for the holding institution), etc. We discussed the fact that the Virtual Reference Desk conference is having problems with attendees, conflicting opportunities, and overall focus. Core questions include is it still appropriate to maintain a separate conference, given that

virtual reference is merely another type of reference service, similar to telephone reference? What are the pros and cons of blending the VRD with Computers in Libraries, a for-profit conference? What are the pros and cons of scheduling the VRD as a possible RUSA preconference at the ALA Annual conference or as part of the biennial RUSA conference? Everyone agreed that virtual reference is no longer either “new” or “novel,” but merely just another way of providing reference. The value of the VRD as an incubator for new technology was noted. Isabel and others felt that reference librarians are participating in other conferences and types of meetings and that increasingly, virtual reference is staffed by nonprofessionals. Annsofie reminded the group to keep the international focus in mind - - how do you bring virtual reference to the international table?. Several present stated that they would no longer go to a focused conference on virtual reference, but that they remained interested in the integration and application of technology in reference service. Everyone agreed that this is an evolving venue, and that the philosophy is going to be broader than where it was when virtual reference first appeared on the scene, when it was both “new” and “novel.” Franceen will keep the Standing Committee apprised of developments. At this point, Franceen is not looking for Section sponsorship or endorsement but for support for emerging trends.

### **Seoul Conference: Open Session and Satellite Seoul**

## **"Libraries: Dynamic Engines for the Knowledge and Information Society"**

**20-24 August 2006, Seoul, Korea**

<http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla72/index.htm>

#### Open Session

Bodil gave a full report on behalf of the planning committee for the open session. The program will be on marketing reference services in today’s library onsite and virtual; about 20 persons responded to the call. Papers about different kinds of libraries will be presented - - about a public library (China); about partnerships (Greece, the only paper from Europe); university library (Kenya). An overview about marketing reference services in Korean libraries, onsite and virtual, will be presented by a representative from our host country. Gitte Larsen, Head, Department of Continuing Education and Consultancy, The Royal Danish Librarian School, will be the moderator again. Annsofie expressed compliments to Bodil and her “team” for their efforts to date and for what promises to be a lively exchange. Five (5) gifts are needed and will be procured by our tireless budget shopper, Marty. Members of the planning committee include Amanda, Franceen and Sarah, in addition to Bodil.

#### Satellite

Isabel provided an update on the IFLA Satellite meeting.

Resource Sharing, Reference and Collection Development in a Digital Age – A Practical Approach, August 16 – 18, 2006; <http://www.nl.go.kr/satellitemeeting/wlic/registration.php>

The dates for this are August 17 and 18. Background was provided, including discussion of the Standing Committee’s “support” for the Satellite. Isabel noted that the Standing Committee had voted “no” on whether or not to hold the Satellite, but that it had already been settled with IFLA. Co-sponsors include the Sections of Document Delivery Resource & 7 Sharing and Acquisition & Collection Development. Expected attendance is 50 – 100 librarians. We will have two presentations on the second day of the Satellite, one by Bodil and one by the National Diet Library (Japan) on their Collaborative Reference Database project. Our session is from 9.00 – 11.00 and there is a wrap-up of the meeting from 11.30 – 12.30. The expense of coming to the conference early was noted, as was the fact that this

will be monsoon season in Korea. Problems with lodging even at this early date (March) were noted. Also noted was the venue for the Satellite, outside the conference "circle." Several competing conferences may draw registrants away from the Satellite. For these various reasons, registration may be a challenge. Isabel reported that no one has said anything about canceling the satellite if there aren't enough registrations; she will bring this up and report back. Beth inquired if it was possible to register for one day of the Satellite only. Isabel replied that it was not; the price is 80 euros; goes to 90 before July 1; 100 onsite; registration for standing committee members is 80.

Discussion ensued of possible presentation topics and possible presenters. Many members expressed concern about the uneasy fit between the various IFLA sections, and how this "plays out" in Satellite scope and presentations.

The issue of a satellite meeting in Durban was raised. Marty expressed his preference that we have a longer meeting rather than a satellite. Others expressed their interest in eliminating the Durban satellite entirely. Francis pointed out that joint programs are a dog's breakfast - - nothing in common and expressed his opinion that we shouldn't go along with this kind of "political nonsense" anymore. He reiterated the importance of a clearly defined focus, and bemoaned that we had gotten locked into the Seoul satellite with other sections. Franceen echoed that there have to be affiliations and natural common interests and stated that she likes the idea of working with Division 8 and the country aspects in particular for Durban.

### **Strategic Plan 2006-2007**

The focus of the afternoon discussion was on the Section's Strategic Plan. Our objective was to identify a priority list for what we want to achieve (deliverables) before Korea. We agreed on the importance of identifying select issues and projects for focus for the next several months; the identification of one element from each group to put forward was considered as one approach. Our time period is this year, a fact which pertains to funding. Project requests need to be submitted between now and soon after the South Korea conference so we can get funding.

Highlights of discussion of individual Plan actions follow.

The group decided to divide into teams to review each section of goals from the strategic plan and suggest potential actions we can take during the next year.

#### Goal 1: Promote excellence and collaboration in reference and information services

- 1.1 Best practices: what we do, how we share those roles, how best practices work in those organizations, criteria in recruitment, importance of recruitment
- 1.2 The impact of the digital environment: international inquiry on the same model as Kirsti Nielsen's project, in cooperation with IFLA library science education people, produce a publication
- 1.3 Visibility of reference and information services: Seoul program is on marketing; brochure that talks about practical ways in which staff could make their library's web pages better for their users
- 1.4 Collaborative initiatives: lists of links on web pages of great libraries; Ask a librarian services etc.; more research (IFLA, UNESCO); natural partners - - IFLA, UNESCO, FAIFE

## Goal 2. Promote user-centered reference and information services

2.1 Best practices: this is similar to Goal 1, 1.1; our web sites need to be as welcoming as our physical sites

2.2 Collection of regional or country reports on outstanding user-centered reference and information services: our programs have done a lot of 2.1 and 2.2

2.3 Investigate sources of funding for the promotion of reference and information services to meet specific user needs: much depends on the country and how the institution is funded; problems with technical support; combined information points; difficult for users to distinguish who is helping them; take a look at RUSA's guidelines for behavioral performance (<http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaprotocols/referenceguide/guidelinesbehavioral.htm>); look at guidelines for nonlibrarians; adopt or provide our own; consortial models for reference; help software through our web sites - - providing reference in the background; problems of new librarians coming into the profession; comfortable with the e-world; curriculum in library schools; format is secondary to the service; place as library; disconnect between IT and front-line staff - - systems people drive the van vs. front-line; what do systems people need to know about libraries and vice versa; help for librarians that in the end help the users; did you really mean this?

## Goal 3. Establish quality standards for reference and information services

3.1 Evaluate appropriate print and digital collections and materials: nothing we can do short of develop supporting criteria

3.2 Explore guidelines and standards: review various codes of ethics, e.g. national codes

3.3 Investigate standards, guidelines or mechanism for measuring . . . : identify and investigate systems that measure performance - - LibQUAL, UK counterpart; partner with Section on Statistics or the management side of the marketing and management section; consider putting on a workshop with natural partners; focus on measures and practical applications; not only figures, sociology and politics.

## Goal 4. Promote the availability of sustainable reference and information services to users worldwide

4.1 Provide a forum for information on the nature of reference and information services worldwide: The whole Section is the forum

4.2 Develop and initiate strategic and sustainable reference and information services projects . . . . : toolkit will be up within 4 – 6 weeks; pilot with toolkit in South Africa, Namibia; Zimbabwe; Zanzibar; consider a complimentary program for Durban; cooperating with various organizations (NESCO, WHO, SIDA, World Summit for the Information Society initiatives - - no organization as such is doing anything; need to piggy back on an organization that is already doing something

4.3 Translate the information brochure and other materials: the Standing Committee recognizes the value of updating prior to translation; translation of updated materials into Korean and Japanese is planned

4.4 Publish the Section's Newsletter annually: done!

## Goal 5. Support library and information services staff in providing high-quality services

5.1 Emphasize the necessity of reference and information services training within the formal educational curricula: tied up with 1.1; schools tie in with 1.2;

5.2 Emphasize and support continuing education . . . . :

5.3 Establish an electronic forum for discussions on reference and information services issues: we meet this through our web pages; only a "give" not a forum; web page is a catalyst to discussion

## Goal 6. Membership development

6.1 Update the Section's brochure: discussed above

6.2 Inform colleagues around the world of the section's homepage

6.3 Inform regional library associations and listservs about the Section's activities:

Below are the recommendations from the various teams:

**Group 1:** Do a survey on remote vs. face to face reference services extended internationally in collaboration with the library science education section, FAIFE and UNESCO. This would need to be a major professional board project; we would be the contact point; end result would be a book or some central project several years out; initial research was a library school project; seems like a far leap for this section to take on vs. other projects.

**Group 2:** Guidelines and suggestions for Reference centered user friendly web sites Suggestions and Guidelines for library Web pages from a Reference and Information Services (making web sites user friendly from a reference point of view); Isabel, Marty, and Sarah agreed to investigate this further.

**Group 3:** Develop a workshop that would teach library evaluation instruments and how to use them to assess reference and information services; and then make changes within their organizations; Franceen is starting this right now where she works; Franceen and Frank will look at this as a possible workshop topic at a future IFLA Conference.

**Group 4:** Pilot using the toolkit in South Africa and other African countries in Region 8 with the intent to make a report at the Durban conference. This could be developed as a one year small project which involves seeking volunteer institutions, developing the project proposal, timeline, and budget needed. If accepted by our Division and the Professional Board, money would be available from January – December 2007 – Marty, Sarah and Petra will investigate and develop a draft proposal for the Seoul conference.

**Group 5:** Develop behavioral standards for non-reference trained library staff that provide first-level reference services. Such guidelines would be very valuable and could be developed and put in the toolkit; this too can be a small project. Petra, Marty and Sarah will investigate.

### Final discussion

The section members discussed the recommendations from each of the groups and decided to first work on Group 4's recommendation of a pilot assessment of the toolkit for developing reference and information services and that the creation of behavioral standards for non-reference trained staff might be included in some way as part of this. The long term maintenance of the toolkit; needs to be discussed at the Seoul conference.

All recommendations from the groups are reasonable and solid; some elements of these ideas need to be revisited and not dropped from sight.

### Closing

On closing the meeting everyone noted that the technique had worked very well and that it had been an interesting experience to have one of our members join us virtually on the phone. Annsofie thanked everybody for a fruitful and interesting midterm meeting with special address to our hosts.

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<http://www.ifla.org/VII/s36/index.htm>