IFLA Standing Committee on Reference Work

Note from the Chair

Annsofie Oscarsson, Interim Chair

Dear colleagues,

There was a historic moment last year in Boston when this section emerged from being a Discussion Group. The establishment of this Section was preceded by a four-year period of planning and strategic work with enthusiastic people, and we would like to thank all these people for their encouragement and support. A short history of the Section is on page 2.

The Standing Committee is provisional until regular nominations take place in 2003. Thirteen people were elected at the Boston conference, including the interim Chair, Secretary/Financial Officer and Information Coordinator. In March, six members were approved, making a total of 19, plus one corresponding member. Since the geographic balance is good and since there is a variety of library types represented, we trust that many aspects of this field of library work will be considered.

This is the first issue of our Newsletter and it includes the minutes from the two SC meetings held in Boston, our Mission and Strategic Plan, a report on our Digital Reference Guidelines project, and highlights of our programs for Glasgow. More than 60 people responded to our Call for Papers for the Open Session "Globalization in Reference Work", and the small organizing committee has done excellent work in choosing among these interesting papers. We look forward to a real global view. We will also offer a whole day workshop on *How to Start a Digital Reference Service in your Library*. This is a hot topic and we expect many participants, so we advise you to register quickly for this workshop.

In forthcoming Newsletters we intend to include news and innovations from the field and we encourage you to contribute. We hope to meet many of you in Glasgow and we also look forward to hearing from you.

Annsofie Oscarsson,
Umeå University Library

Agendas for Meetings in Glasgow

Standing Committee I
Saturday 17 August
8:30-11:20

1. Approval of agenda
2. Chairman's report
3. Report from the Coordinating Board (Secretary Martin Kesselman)
4. Financial report and procedures (Secretary/Treasurer Martin Kesselman)
5. Report from the Information Coordinator (Catherine Wojewodzki)
6. Strategic plan 2002-2003
7. Report on Project on Digital Reference Guidelines (Vera Fullerton)
8. Information and discussion on UNESCO project on Digital Guidelines
9. Matters concerning Glasgow conference
    a) Open session
    b) Workshop
10. Planning for Berlin 2003
11. Other business

Standing Committee II
Friday 23 August
10:15 - 12:15

1. Reports on Glasgow conference
    a) Open Session
    b) Workshop
2. Planning for Berlin (cont.)
3. Advance planning for Buenos Aires 2004
4. Other business

Open Session
Globalisation in Reference Services
Wednesday 21 August
8:30 - 11:00

* Introduction to the themes of the Open Session - and a brief summary of the latest news of CDRS. DIANE NESTER KRESH (Library of Congress, Washington DC, USA)

* Référence virtuelle Canada: un service canadien dans un environnement multiculturel. Virtual Reference Canada: A Canadian service in a multicultural environment. FRANCEEN GAUDET and NICHOLAS SAVARD (National Library of Canada, Ottawa, Canada)

* Cultural implications of a global context: the need for the reference librarian to ask again "Who is my client?" CAROLYN MCSWINEY University of South Australia Library, Adelaide, Australia)

* Reference work in a library system without national bibliographies and union catalogues. Internet as a tool for reference work. Experiences from the IFLA/Danida trial project in Ghana. RUTH KONDRUP (State and University Library, Aarhus, Denmark)

* La Formation des bibliothécaires de référence à l'Ecole des Bibliothécaires, Archivistes et Documentalistes de l'Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar MODY SOW (Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Senegal)

* New role for reference librarians in Polish academic libraries in the new age of democracy. JOLANTA WROBEL (Wroclaw University of Technology, Wroclaw, Poland)

IFLA Discussion Group on Reference Work: a 4-year perspective

by Annsofie Oscarsson,
Head of Reference, Umeå University Library, Sweden

Reference service is a fundamental pillar of our libraries and has become even more important with the information explosion on the Internet. While we often hear "You can find anything on the Net," as librarians we know that this is not true. We know there are lots of pit-falls and the quality of information on the Internet is not always good.

It is extremely important for these matters to be discussed and considered on an international level, and IFLA is the appropriate forum.

Until 1997 there was no forum within IFLA specifically addressing Reference Work. At the Copenhagen conference, I took the initiative of starting a Discussion Group as an affiliate of the Section of Document Delivery and Interlending. The number of partici-pants has increased every year, from 40 for the first meeting to 150 in Jerusalem.

The first official meeting was in **Amsterdam** (1998). The topic was *The Organization of Reference Services*. In order to find out if organizational structure for refer-ence services varied

How to Start a Virtual Reference Service in Your Library

Thursday, 22 August 2002
9:30-4:00pm (lunch & afternoon break refreshments included)

Pre-registration required by 5 August 2002
Pre-registrants will receive via email a pre-workshop assignment of readings and sites to visit.

Through lecture, discussion, demonstrations, a folder of handouts, and exercises, the following themes will be covered:
· The changing mission and models of reference service in response to changes in the community's information-seeking behaviors
· New skills and policies required for working in the virtual environment
· Demonstrations of live, real-time remote reference services:
     24/7 Ref, BIS.LiveInfo, QuestionPoint, and WebHelp
· Is virtual reference service right for your library?
· Steps to take when you get home.

Facilitator: Anne G. Lipow
    Library Solutions Institute, Berkeley, California
Virtual reference service representatives: Susan McGlamery, 24/7 Reference; Christine Glaeser, BIS.LiveInfo, Univ. of Oldenburg, Germany; Diane Kresh, LC; Chip Nilges, OCLC, on QuestionPoint

IFLA Discussion Group on Reference Work: a 4-year perspective

Continued from page 2

with library type, a small study was organized. The following four library types were identified: National Libraries, University and Research Libraries, Public Libraries and Special Libraries. For each, a coordinator was asked to conduct and report on a survey based on three questions:

1. Where in the organization is the reference department found?
2. Which services are offered, and are there different levels?
3. What are the positive and negative effects?

The substance of the discussion was as follows. It is not the organization itself that is important, but rather the needs of the users and what they expect from reference librarians. We can expect information technology to change our organizations, but don't yet know how we can best serve the users, whether physical or virtual service. Which services are we going to provide in the future? How do we adapt our library organization to meet with future needs?

The second official meeting took place in **Bangkok** (1999). Our Discussion Group theme was *The New Definition of Reference Work in a Changing Reference Culture*. More than 100 people from different parts of the world attended the meeting. Two of the eight papers referred to surveys based on the questionnaire from previous year. Their conclusions highlighted the changing relationship between reference librarians and users. One of the challenging facts -- if reference librarians cannot provide the high quality service users need and expect, users will try to obtain their answers from other reference service providers.

Additional topics of discussion in Bangkok included roving reference librarians and their use of wireless

IFLA Discussion Group on Reference Work: a 4-year perspective

communication, the "virtual reference interview" or how to make the computerized reference service more human, and declining reference desk statistics.

The **Jerusalem** (2000) meeting, *A Space Odyssey: Building Bridges between Virtual and Physical Reference Services*, attracted more than 150 reference librarians. Five discussion papers provided a basis for discussion. The topics included new services, such as the Collaborative Digital Reference Services of the Library of Congress, and reference services within special collections, such as European Document Information. Additional discussion focused on real-time digital service and changing models for the physical environment for offering reference (such as roving reference librarians instead of a traditional reference desk), the changing role of librarians, and the importance of attracting young professionals to reference service.

Minutes: Interim Standing Committee Meeting I
August 18, 2001

Introductions & attendance: Members of the Standing Committee and Observers introduced themselves. All members of the SC present except for apologies received from Diane Kresh. A total of 37 individuals attended the SC meetings.

Announcements: The SC can have up to 20 members, but the SC needs more geographic balance. Various

meetings at the IFLA conference were announced.

Annsofie's Report: Some history of the Discussion Group's transformation to a SC was provided. (See "IFLA Discussion Group on Reference Work: a 4-year perspective" elsewhere in the newsletter.) In March the IFLA PB converted the Discussion Group into a Standing Committee and an Interim Standing Committee was established. The Coordinating Board of Division 5 to which the SC belongs approved candidates for the interim with the idea that more individuals could be added during and after the Boston conference.

Election of Interim SC officers for 2001-2003: Annsofie Oscarsson was elected as chair, Marty Kesselman was elected Secretary/Treasurer, and Cathy Wojewodzki as Information Coordinator.

Financial Report: No funds have been given to the SC but 720NLG are available for this year.

Strategic Plan for 2002/2003: The Strategic Plan replaces the Medium Term Program of the past. It consists of 3 parts -- mission, priorities and action plan and should be linked to the IFLA List of Professional Priorities that we reviewed at the meeting. It was decided that Annsofie, Marty and Cathy meet between the two SCs and develop a draft plan. Some brainstorming produced the following list of ideas:
- Develop a listserv for the SC.
- Develop a website that keeps track of late breaking news regarding reference -- "RefWatch."
- Raise awareness and consciousness about reference and marketing reference services effectively. How can we make ourselves more visible? It was noted that we are the "hidden secret" in the library.

- What is professional work in reference work these days?
- State of the art of what reference work is like in various parts of the world.
- Investigate what guidelines exist for reference service.
- Problem of vocabulary -- in some languages there is no word for reference service, sometimes vocabulary can be limiting -- we are the only profession that has the name of the place we work as part of our title.
- Knowing our competition -- survey and evaluation of the numerous web-based services providing reference-like services.
- Need to market the new SC -- develop a brochure.

Boston Conference Matters: Program is Monday. It was noted that IFLA has not included PowerPoint presentations on IFLANET and that we should add these presentations to the Reference Work SC website. Cathy as information coordinator and responsible for the SC website will look into this. [It was later learned that IFLANET has chosen not to mount PowerPoint presentation files.] Also noted were several poster sessions related to reference services and a workshop by the Social Sciences SC covering electronic reference service at MIT.

Glasgow Conference: We agreed on a workshop entitled, "How to Start a Virtual Reference Service in Your Library." Anne Lipow will coordinate the workshop and locate an off-conference site. Several ideas were expressed for topics including those mentioned already during the brainstorming on the strategic plan. Additional ideas: (1) Making Ourselves Visible, (2) Who needs our services and how do we get ourselves out there? and (3) Knowing the Competition.

Interim Standing Committee Meeting II

August 20, 2001

Boston Open Session: There was an overflow crowd of over 300 persons, which demonstrates great interest in the SC. Need for simultaneous interpretation was noted.

Strategic Plan Draft

MISSION

The Section on Reference Work brings together practitioners, educators, and researchers in the field of library reference service from around the world to exchange ideas, knowledge, and experience. The Section organizes meetings and workshops during the annual conference and in the IFLA regions, fosters the development of international standards and guidelines for service, disseminates current information on reference trends, and sponsors research and pilot projects to promote high-quality state-of-the-art reference service.

PRIORITIES

1. Focus on user-centered reference services.
2. Organization and staffing of reference services
3. Ethics and the provision of high quality service
4. Impact of the digital environment on reference services
5. Reference collections in a digital world
6. Continuing education of reference librarians
7. Provide a forum for information on the nature of reference work in different parts of the world.
8. Marketing/Visibility of library reference services

ACTION PLAN

1. Develop a listserv for the SC.
2. Develop an informational brochure in English (first year) and translate it into French and German (second year).
3. Produce an annual newsletter and work towards producing two newsletters per year.
4. Organize programs/workshops/discussion forums for the Glasgow and Berlin IFLA conferences.
5. Develop and maintain a website for the SC on IFLANET.
6. Investigate the development of a current awareness website for up to date reference developments and trends.
7. Investigate what guidelines exist for electronic reference around the world.
8. Determine which other units within IFLA we might cooperate with on programs and projects.
9. Investigate how the SC might review the state of the art of reference work in countries around the world.

Tasks: Cathy, as Information Officer, will develop the information brochure and website. Once the open session and workshop details are complete, Cathy will also edit the newsletter for the Spring in cooperation with the chair and secretary. Marty will initiate the listserv at Rutgers University.

Workshop for Glasgow: Anne will coordinate and plan for a site in Scotland for the workshop. Topic is "How to Start a Virtual Reference Service in Your Library."

Open Session for Glasgow: Topic decided on is Globalization of Reference Services with the following possible themes:
· Cultural differences and reference.
· Reaching out to multicultural populations
· New roles for reference librarians
· Cooperation / Collaboration of reference services.
Bodil Wohnert, Andrea Delumeau, and Josje Calff will be responsible for

developing the open session.

SC Project Submitted: The SC submitted a request for a small project to the CB to identify guidelines that exist for electronic reference services. Vera Fullerton will direct the project.

Brainstorming for Berlin: One additional topic involved Libraries and the role of reference librarians in helping to build democracy.

Examining the Current State of Digital Reference Standards

by Vera Fullerton
George Washington University

During the IFLA 2001 Conference in Boston, the Reference Section submitted a project proposal to identify and monitor efforts toward the creation of digital reference standards.

Strong interest in developing standards and guidelines for digital reference services exists among librarians as evidenced by articles in the library literature, discussions on list servs, and conference topics. At this stage however, many librarians are still engaged in debate regarding the merits of the service, when to offer it, how to staff it, software selection, etc.

Most libraries offering a virtual reference service are at the pilot or early post-pilot stage. If digital reference standards are in place, they tend to be in the form of internal documents, informal in nature, and closely reflect those used for general reference services and e-mail reference. In most cases, libraries offering a digital reference service offer information regarding privacy guidelines and service restrictions.

IFLA Reference Work Standing Committee Strategic Plan, 2001-2003

Mission

The Reference Work Section brings together practitioners, educators, and researchers in the field of library reference service from around the world to exchange ideas, knowledge, and experience. The Section organizes meetings and workshops during the annual conference and in the IFLA regions, fosters the development of international standards and guidelines for service, disseminates current information on reference trends, and sponsors research and pilot projects to promote high-quality state-of-the-art reference service.

Goals

1. Focus on user-centered reference services.

Professional priorities: (a) Supporting the role of libraries in society; (d) Providing unrestricted access to information; (f) Promoting resource sharing; (g) Preserving our intellectual heritage

ACTION

1.1 Investigate how the SC might review the state-of-the-art of reference work in countries around the world.

2. Organization and staffing of reference services

Professional priorities: (a) Supporting the role of libraries in society; (d) Providing unrestricted access to information; (f) Promoting resource sharing; (g) Preserving our intellectual heritage; (h) Developing library professionals

ACTION

2.1 Investigate how the SC might review the state of the art of reference work in countries around the world.

3. Ethics and the provision of high quality service

Professional priorities:

(a) Supporting the role of libraries in society; (d) Providing unrestricted access to information; (f) Promoting resource sharing; (g) Preserving our intellectual heritage; (h) Developing library professionals

4. Impact of the digital environment on reference services

Professional priorities: (d) Providing unrestricted access to information; (f) Promoting resource sharing; (g) Preserving our intellectual heritage; (k) representing libraries in the technological marketplace

5. Reference collections in a digital world

Professional priorities: (d) Providing unrestricted access to information; (f) Promoting resource sharing; (g) Preserving our intellectual heritage; (k) representing libraries in the technological marketplace

ACTION

5.1 Investigate what guidelines exist for electronic reference around the world.

6. Continuing education of reference librarians

Professional priorities: (h) Developing library professionals; (i) Promoting standards, guidelines and best practice

7. Provide a forum for information on the nature of reference work in different parts of the world.

Professional priorities:

(a) Supporting the role of libraries in society; (d) Providing unrestricted access to information; (f) Promoting resource sharing; (g) Preserving our intellectual heritage; (h) Developing library professionals

ACTION

7.1 Develop a listserv for the SC.

7.2 Develop an informational brochure in English (first year) and translate it into French and German (second year).

7.3 Produce an annual newsletter and work towards producing two newsletters per year.

7.4 Organize ograms/workshops/discussion forums for the Glasgow and Berlin IFLA conferences.

7.5 Develop and maintain a website for the SC on IFLANET.

7.6 Investigate the development of a current awareness website for up to date reference developments and trends.

Examining the Current State of Digital Reference Standards

The wealth of literature regarding standards of traditional reference and e-mail reference services will serve as a useful resource during the development of digital reference standards. However, the unique nature of digital reference introduces new realm of issues and challenges. This need for standards becomes even more important as consortium-wide digital reference services continue to evolve.

The Virtual Reference Desk (VRD), a project dedicated to the advancement of digital reference and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, has taken the lead in working towards the development of standards. Large consortial-based virtual reference services, such as CDRS, have looked towards VRD for the development of standards. VRD's current version of digital standards, entitled "Facets of Quality" is available at http://www.vrd.org/facets-10-00.shtml. The National Information Standards Organization (NISO) is also exploring the issues and opportunities associated with the development of digital reference standards.

As part of the IFLA Digital Standards project, I am creating a web page that highlights these and other activities. Please send comments and ideas to me, Vera Fullerton, at vfullert@gwu.edu

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