

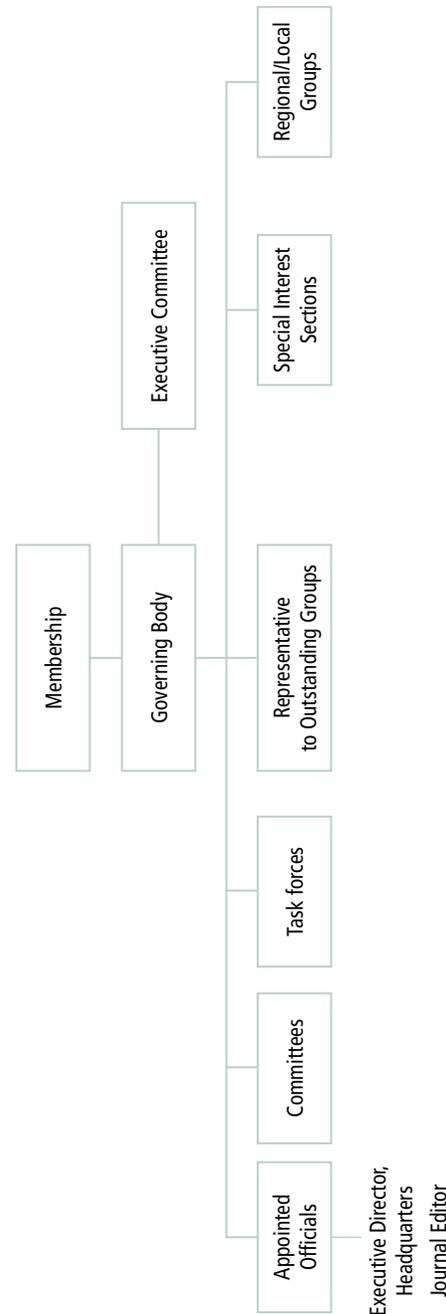
can bring issues to the board and membership for consideration that are relevant to their areas of interest or expertise, can represent the association to outside groups with similar interests, and can appeal to nonmembers with similar interests to join the association.

Future association leaders often get their start from participation in geographic or professional interest groups of the association so an inclusive organizational structure promotes not only participation, but also leadership development within the association.

### Reporting Structure

It is important that a reporting structure be developed so that the membership can have a comprehensive picture of the association's activities. The reporting structure should be reflected in the organizational structure. The governing body should require reports from all association units (committees, sections, task forces, etc.) and affiliates at least annually. These reports should be made available to the membership either through the association's website, annual report, or other mechanism. Typically the governing body will vote on all recommendations contained in unit reports and forward these decisions to the membership. In some circumstances described in the bylaws, the membership as a whole may be asked to vote on recommendations presented in unit reports. The governing body should also distribute minutes of meetings to inform members about decisions and major issues that are being discussed.

### Organizational Chart Example



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International Federation of  
Library Associations and Institutions  
Fédération Internationale  
des Associations de Bibliothécaires  
et des Bibliothèques  
Federación Internacional de  
Asociaciones e Instituciones  
Bibliotecarias  
Internationaler Verband  
der Bibliothekarischen  
Vereine und Institutionen

# GUIDELINES FOR THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF ASSOCIATIONS

## Management of Library Associations Section

<http://www.ifla.org/VII/s40/smla.htm>

## Introduction

Associations exist to serve their memberships. A well-defined and understood association organizational structure is crucial to the effective and efficient operation of the association. The structure must take into account the social, cultural, political, and developmental environment of the country in which the association is located, and will vary depending upon these factors. The structure helps to define relationships among all parts of the association (board, committees, task forces, etc.) and the membership. The structure can also serve to bring the association closer to individual members.

This pamphlet complements other IFLA MLAS pamphlets including "Guidelines for Governing and Leading Library Associations," "Guidelines for Library Association Operations," and "Developing Policies and Procedures."

## Elements of organizational structure

The association's bylaws provide the legal basis for the association's organizational structure—naming categories of membership, governing bodies, standing committees, chief appointed and elected officers, and other units of the association, and designating roles, responsibilities, and qualifications for each.

The primary objectives of an association are detailed in the legal documentation necessary for an association to be established and registered by its country's government. This documentation is sometimes called the articles of incorporation or charter. Objectives described in the documentation should be accounted for in an association's organizational structure. For example, if an association has been established to provide professional continuing education to its members, there should be a group established in the association to carry out this task.

The association has several elements of organizational

structure co-existing within the same association. The number of different entities present in each of these elements depends upon the size, diversity of interests, scope, and other aspects of the association.

### Governance

An association is typically hierarchical in nature with a board of directors or council as the highest or ultimate authority in matters of policy, finances, etc. Working under the direction of the board or an executive committee (a subset of the board) are committees, task forces, representatives to other organizations, sections, a paid chief staff person (if applicable), and other units of the association. The number, functions, and responsibilities of the officers and groups will vary according to the size and nature of the organization. The figure on the back of this pamphlet shows a typical association organizational chart. The organizational chart is hierarchical in arrangement with the ultimate decision-makers at the top of the chart. A clear understanding of the organizational structure will help members bring issues to the association for consideration and action. Job descriptions should be developed to define the responsibilities of individual officers, appointed officials, and the chief staff officer, if applicable, so that overlaps in responsibilities don't occur.

Committees, task forces, and other similar units should have a charge or statement that describes the group's purpose, a defined term of existence, an approved number of members, and a defined reporting relationship to another unit within the organization, usually the board of directors or other governing body. Sections and other professional interest groups should report directly to the governing body and may need their own bylaws. These bylaws should not conflict with the parent association's bylaws.

### Strategic and business plans

The organizational structure should support the objectives of the strategic plan. For example, if one of the objectives of the association is to increase membership, there should be within the structure a committee or other group assigned to work on this objective. On the other hand, if there are units within the organizational structure that are no longer supporting any goals or objectives of the association, the units should be examined for elimination.

Since the strategic plan is linked to the association's business plan and budget, the organizational structure should also support and be supported by the business plan. For example, committees should receive funds to accomplish the objectives assigned to them and budgeted activities should be assigned to groups responsible for completing the activities.

### Geographic groups

The national association may often seem very remote to the individual members. To bring the association closer to individual members, an association may have, as part of its structure, local or regional groups (located in cities, states, provinces, or regions of a country). This structure makes it easier for members to attend association-sponsored events and participate in association activities. These groups may either be legal parts of the association or affiliated groups with requirements for affiliation listed in the bylaws or other association policies.

### Professional interest groups

Sections or groups that share professional interests, skills or practices, or work in similar types of libraries should be provided for in an association's organizational structure, particularly if the association is large. For example, librarians who work in technical services areas or public librarians should be able to form groups or sections within the larger association and be formally recognized by it. These groups or sections