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IFLA Standing Committee Reference and Information Services NEWSLETTER

Note from the Chair



*Annsophie Oscarsson, Chair, at
Midwinter Meeting in Rome*

Dear colleagues,
It is a pleasure, to greet you all
and take the opportunity of
opening this issue of our
Newsletter.

Shortly after the Buenos Aires
conference last year, we were
struck by the sad notice of the
death of our colleague, Standing
Committee member and friend
Anne Lipow. We honor her with
an obituary in this issue, knowing
that her ideas and thoughts
regarding Rethinking Reference
will always be present in our
minds.

I would like to draw your attention
to the new name of the section:
Reference and Information Services

Section or the catchy acronym:
RISS. Regarding the fact that
reference work today has a clear
focus on the user's perspective
which includes availability and
service, we decided to make the
name of the section reflect this
important aspect. Also the word
"reference" itself has been discussed
during the year, and we intend to
further examine the meaning of the
concept in different countries.

For the first time we arranged a
Midwinter Meeting this year, and
we choose Rome to be the venue.
Our experience was positive, and we
realized the importance and positive
impact of this opportunity to gain
time for discussions as well as for
concrete work. In addition to our
meeting, we participated in a
workshop with the Italian Library
Association. The workshop
addressed digital reference service
in different countries and the
Section's previously published
Guidelines. There also was an
opportunity to visit the Vatican
Library.

Our program for the Oslo
conference will include an Open
Session with the following theme:
Virtual Versus Face-2-Face. A
number of panelists from different
countries will share experiences and
ideas. A Poster Session will be held
on the Section's project: *Toolkit for
Developing Reference Services*.

I would also like to remind you of the satellite conference in Järvenpää *Physical Library and Beyond: Library as Place and Library in Cyberspace* where aspects on library resources and services in the new hybrid environment will be discussed.

As always, I would encourage you to let us know ideas and topics that you would like the RISS to undertake. Also, don't forget to check the Section's website for regular updates on our activities.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity of welcoming you all to Scandinavia and Oslo!

All my best,
Annsofie Oscarsson

NEW NAME

IFLA's Professional Committee approved in February 2005 the Section's request for a change of the name.

Our new name is:

**REFERENCE and
INFORMATION SERVICES
Section**

Wanted: Newsletter editor for section newsletter. You do not need to be at the IFLA meetings to assume this responsibility. Please let Annsofie or Cathy know if you are interested.

Open session - Oslo 2005

Sunday August 13.

13:45-15:45

Virtual Versus Face-2-Face Reference and information Services – A Personal Service Delivered to the “Invisible” User Via Library Portals

Examples of virtual reference and information services from around the world will be presented by 6 panellists. These will be followed by an open discussion. Information on all the services described will be available on the section's IFLA website. The presentations and discussion will be in English.

A Question about Switzerland? : SwissInfoDesk

Jean-Philippe Accart - Head of Reference Service
Swiss National Library
Bern - Switzerland

People's Network Enquire: Virtual Reference in England

Linda Berube - Regional Manager
Co-East, Cambridgeshire – UK

Virtual versus Face to Face Reference: Comparing Users' Perspectives on Visits to Physical and Virtual Reference Desks in Public and Academic Libraries.

Kirsti Nilsen - Adjunct Professor
Faculty of Information and Media Studies, The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario - Canada

Utilizing Virtual Reference to Serve Multitype Library Patrons

Vince A. Mariner - Coordinator of Ask a Librarian (Florida)
College Center for Library Automation
Tallahassee, Florida - USA
and Eva Lunneborg - National Coordinator – Librarian on Duty
The Royal Library – National Library of Sweden
Stockholm – Sweden

Reference Services – A Hassle-Free and Seamless Service: The Singapore Experience

Ngian Lek Choh - Director
National Library Board
Singapore

Moderator: Gitte Larsen, Head, Dept. of Continuing Education and Consultancy
The Royal Danish Librarian School
Copenhagen - Denmark

ANNE GRODZINS LIPOW

In Memoriam



Anne Grodzins Lipow, founder and director of Library Solutions Institute and Press in Berkeley, died peacefully at her home near San Francisco, California late on September 9, 2005. She is survived by her husband, Stephen Silberstein (also a librarian and Executive Vice President of Innovative Interfaces Inc.), her children, and grandchildren. Anne will be remembered as a crusader for social justice, a labor activist, a world traveler, a maker and internationally recognized leader in academic and reference librarianship.

After receiving an MLS from the University of California, Berkeley, Anne went on to an innovative career at UC Berkeley. In 1992, she retired to become a full-time trainer, publisher, and consultant on library technology and management issues.

Almost to the end Anne was busy traveling worldwide inspiring, advising, and conducting workshops for librarians occupied with reference work – especially virtual reference and digital reference. She is well known among librarians in the many countries where she went to help improve reference services.

Anne was an active (what could she else be!) member of IFLA Reference Work Section. She helped us shape our strategic plan and arranged work shops and discussion groups for the section.

Anne died 69 years young and we miss her.

TOOLKIT FOR DEVELOPING REFERENCE SERVICES

Martin Kesselman, Rutgers University Libraries, NJ, USA
Sarah Watstein, UCLA, CA, USA
Linda Hartley, Rutgers University, NJ, USA

A wealth of information is available, and in some cases, freely available to developing countries. However, a major gap exists in some countries where library staffs do not have the reference skills necessary to provide access to information needed to improve their countries economically and socially. Where services do exist, service standards and guidelines for often do not.

To assist librarians and decision makers in developing countries and elsewhere, the IFLA Reference and Information Services Section, through an IFLA funded project, is developing a toolkit. The online toolkit will include links to websites on reference services, including planning services, training, marketing, collaboration, and assessment. A poster session at the IFLA conference in Oslo will highlight these elements. It will give examples of major resources and identify where gaps exist for the support of reference services in developing countries. Filling these gaps can be the focus for further work by the Reference and

Information Section and other IFLA units. The toolkit will be available from the Reference and Information Services Section's website.

Some particulars on our work in developing the toolkit:

A preliminary examination of websites from various library associations, charitable organizations, and NGOs has found a wealth of materials in areas related to the establishment of reference services, standards of service, barriers that exist in some countries due to problems of funding and technical infrastructure, and competencies and training. However, awareness that this information exists is minimal, and much of this information is difficult to locate within the websites.

We are, therefore, organizing these resources in the toolkit according to the following topics:

- Need for Reference and Information Services
- Planning for Reference and Information Services
- Training for Reference and Information Services
- Marketing Reference and Information Services
- Collaborations
- Reference and Information Service Evaluation

Beyond the poster and website, we will promote the toolkit through appropriate listservs and email discussion lists. Once areas needing support and areas in which resources do not exist or are inadequate have identified, the project should be expanded to focus on the identified needs. The creation of the needed resources to

support reference services in developing countries will be the focus for a joint, larger IFLA project from the Reference Work Section, the Information Literacy Section, and Division VIII. A task force from these sections will hopefully develop a proposal to submit at the next IFLA conference.

REFERENCE & INFORMATION SERVICES SECTION ANNUAL REPORT 2003-2004

*Submitted by Annsofie Oscarsson,
Chair*

Members:

Chair: *Annsofie Oscarsson*, Sweden
 Secretary/Treasurer: *Martin Kesselman*, United States
 Information Officer: *Catherine Wojewodzki*, United States
 Members: *Concha Lois Cabello*, Spain; *Josje Calff*, The Netherlands; *Valentina Comba*, Italy; *Andrea Delumeau*, France; *Amanda Duffy*, United Kingdom; *Jieyin Feng*, China; *Beth Fisher*, United States; *Birgitta Fogelvik*, Sweden; *Franceen Gaudet*, Canada; *Suzanne D. Gyeszly*, United States; *Gunilla M. Hakli*, Finland; *Francis T. Kirkwood*, Canada; *Diane Nester Kresh*, United States; *Anne Grodzins Lipow*, United States; *Uwe Schwersky*, Germany; *Raymond-Josue Seckel*, France; *Petra van den Born*, France; *Bodil Wohnert*, Denmark. Corresponding Members: *Susan McKnight*, Australia and *Marta Terry*, Cuba

Mission

The Reference & Information Services Section addresses all

aspects of reference work, in all types of libraries, in all regions of the world with emphasis on unrestricted availability of information. The Section aims at bridging the gap between the physical and the digital library, to promote life-long learning and information literacy in all aspects of the knowledge sharing process, and to support library staff around the world with standards and guidelines for reference service.

Areas of special interests are:

- User-centered reference services
- Organization and staffing of reference services
- Ethics of high quality service
- Provision of high quality service
- Impact of the digital environment on reference services
- Reference collections in a digital world
- Continuing education and training of library staff
- Marketing/Visibility of library reference services
- An information forum on the nature of reference work in different parts of the world
- The democracy-building role of reference services

During 2003-2004, the SC planned and carried out the following activities:

Open Session Buenos Aires

Librarian toolkit for the 21st century: tools librarians need to deliver information

- [La biblioteca pública y su contribución al desarrollo económico: ¿realidad o sueño imposible?](#)
[Public Libraries and their Contribution towards Economic Development: Real or an impossible Dream?](#)
[La bibliothèque publique et sa](#)

[contribution au développement économique : réalité ou utopie?](#)
 VANDA FERREIRA DOS SANTOS (Forestry Library, Rome, Italy)

- [ICT skills for information professionals in developing countries: perspectives from a study of the electronic information environment in Nigeria](#)
[Les compétences en TIC pour les professionnels de l'information dans les pays en voie de développement : perspectives d'une étude de l'environnement de l'information électronique au Nigeria](#)
[Aptitudes en Tecnologías de la Información y las Telecomunicaciones para los profesionales de la información en los países en desarrollo: perspectivas de un estudio sobre el entorno de la información electrónica en Nigeria](#)
 LINDA ASHCROFT and CHRIS WATTS, (School of Business Information Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK)
- [Community assessment: An essential part of the Reference Librarian Toolkit](#)
[L'évaluation de la collectivité : une partie essentielle du coffre d'outils du bibliothécaire de référence](#)
[Evaluación de la Comunidad: Parte esencial de las herramientas del bibliotecario referencista](#)
 STEVE HILLER (University of Washington Libraries, Seattle, USA), JANE SCHILLIE (University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, USA) and JIM SELF

(University of Virginia,
Charlottesville, Virginia, USA)

Poster session in Buenos Aires

The section presented a poster session prepared by Diane Kresh and Laura Gottesman with the following focus:

Digital Reference Guidelines: Paving the Way for Collaborative Reference. Various websites for digital reference service were highlighted and discussed in the light of the IFLA Digital Reference Guidelines. Attendees were given a sense of how digital reference services look and feel from both the librarians' and the users' perspectives.

Satellite in Järvenpää

A Satellite meeting to the 71st World Library and information Congress, Oslo 2005 has been planned together with IFLA Library Building and Equipment Section and the Finnish Library Association. The meeting entitled The Physical Library and Beyond will take place in Järvenpää, Finland, 11-12 August. The focus will be the library as a place and the library in cyberspace.

Projects

IFLA Digital Reference Guidelines

Translations of IFLA Digital Reference Guidelines into the following languages were made available at the section's website: French, Spanish, Dutch, Italian and Chinese.

Reference Toolkit for Librarians in Developing countries

To assist librarians and decision makers in developing countries, IFLA has funded a small project to develop a web-based toolkit to bring together existing and freely-available guidelines and other materials that can be utilized to

develop reference services. The project is being carried out by Martin Kesselman, Secretary of the IFLA Reference Work Section together with Sarah Watstein at Virginia Commonwealth University. The toolkit will provide an important compilation and will be the groundwork for a larger project that is planned together with the Information Literacy Section and Division VII to build and create training programs for reference and information literacy for librarians.

Publications

The section's Newsletter was published in June:

[Summer 2004, Volume 3](#)

The section's information brochure was published in [Russian](#)

Section members

As of August there were 55 members registered for the Reference Work Section.

HOW DO YOU SAY REFERENCE IN YOUR LANGUAGE? Concepts and Consequences in Library Reference and Information Service

*By Francis T. Kirkwood
Reference Librarian
Library of Parliament
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A9
Kirkwff@parl.gc.ca*

Reference and information service is an essential component of the public and academic library model accepted in the Western democracies. The paradigm of the librarian as information source underpins the intellectual adventure of the West back to ancient Greece at least:

Knowledge is good, culture is beauty, information is power, and the library is where knowledge, culture and information are preserved, and where everyone worthy of civilization can go to get them. Indeed, librarians have been lauded (or reviled) as the high priesthood of knowledge, the technicians of information retrieval, the intermediaries of public enlightenment, the channels of art and noble ends, the guarantors of a free society.

Yet reference and information service is a curiously difficult concept to pin down. At its most basic level it is little more than a directional task, steering library patrons to the particular book or section of shelving or Internet site where they may hope to find an answer. At other times it can take on dimensions of serious intellectual inquiry, exploring with the patron in depth the nature and real scope of her information need, detecting and tenaciously pursuing obscure and unusual resources across the years and miles, even summarizing and reporting in extension on findings for full-service clients such as busy parliamentarians or corporate executives.

The ambiguous scope and remit of reference and information service is reflected in the diverse terminologies used in different languages to refer to it. The term "reference work" is essentially an Anglo-American coinage to which other library cultures struggle to adapt. In French, for example, I was taught as a young Canadian librarian that the very word "référence" was a "calque d'anglais": the essential books in the reference collection were "ouvrages de consultation" not

“ouvrages de référence” and the public service librarian who came with this collection was a facilitator of its public use, not a problem-solver responding to public information needs. As for the thorny conceptual distinction between a “service d’information” (sometimes offered by a librarian) and a “service de renseignements” (offered by the arrivals and departures desk at a bus terminal), the more said the less I understood.

Another dichotomy in the conceptualization of “reference work” lies between the provision of a generalist service covering the entire scope of knowledge, or at any rate of the library’s holdings, and the provision of more specialized research assistance to the public. The specialist in government documents in one of the reading rooms of legal information that have sprung up in the past five years in hundreds of Russian public and academic libraries is there to answer people’s pressing concern about the rules they have to live by: a much more sharply defined professional agenda than answering trivial questions about everything from baseball scores to the volume of water in the municipal reservoir, at the reference desk of an American city’s main public library. Yet both are “reference work”.

Concepts carry consequences in the way that reference work is organized, funded, staffed, and placed within the library building. Tied to a specific collection or free to roam the Internet and the stacks? Given generous provision as a public service or starved of cash as a secondary assignment? Staffed by senior librarians of broad knowledge

or by junior personnel who know the way to little more than the washroom and the almanac? In a cramped kiosk or a spacious reading room? It all depends on how we visualize the reference task, how our language itself quantifies it.

I hope this article inspires a series of short case studies in our Newsletter from different national, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Describe what terminology is used for “reference and information service” in your own language, and how it shapes the practice of reference work in your country. Don’t just talk about facilities or training but about the “culture of reference” – what it means in a librarian’s career, as a professional commitment, as an idea put into action. Write in your own language to me by e-mail and I will seek out English translations. The goal: 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.

How do you say “reference” in *your* language?

MID-WINTER WORKSHOP IN ROME

American University, Rome, Saturday, March 12: The Italian Library Association (AIB) and the Reference and Information Services Section convened a joint workshop on digital reference services. After a welcome from eh University Librarian Franziska Wallner and AIB Vice President Giuliana Zagra, Valentina Comba introduced Chair Annsofie Oscarsson and the other members of the Section. Annsofie

report on the Section’s activities. After her explanation of the digital reference guidelines, Birgitta Folgevik spoke about the National Library of Sweden’s Ask A Librarian! chat and e-mail service. This popular service is run in collaboration with the Swedish public libraries. Amanda Duffy explained the UK Government policy toward public libraries, the digital reference service started in 1996, and the special initiative of the Welsh libraries called AskCymru. Bodil Wohner spoke about the collaborative service established in Denmark among public and university and special libraries and the Danish electronic reference guidelines. Gunilla Hakli talked about IGS: the Information Gas Station, the Finnish digital reference service that is run collaboratively by university, public, and special libraries. Raymond Josue Seckel spoke about the Bibliotheque Nationale de France collaboration with the Bibliotheque Interuniversitaire de Medecine reference services and the digital reference services of the public libraries in Lyon – *Guichet du savoir*.

Paola Gargiulo, a former reference librarian at the USIS Institute in Milan who now helps several digital reference service projects in Italy, talked about preservation in Italian libraries.

The meeting closed with an open discussion and welcoming farewell remarks from AIB President of the Lazio Region, Giulio Marconi.



10. Report from Information Officer (Cathy Wojewodzki)
11. Project report (Martin Kesselman)
12. Survey on e-ref services (Bodil Wohnert)
13. Report on Järvenpää conference (Gunilla Hakli)
14. Matters concerning Oslo conference
15. Review of Sections
16. Strategic Plan 2006-2007
17. Proposals for new projects
18. Other business

AGENDA

Standing Committee I

Saturday, 13 August 05

14:30 – 11:20

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Approval of agendas
3. Approval of minutes from Buenos Aires and Rome
4. Elections of officers
5. Current Standing Committee vacancies
6. Evaluation of Midwinter meeting
Rome
7. Midwinter meeting 2006
8. Report from Coordinating Board Meeting (Martin Kesselman)
9. Report from Treasurer (Martin Kesselman)

Standing Committee II

Friday, 19 August 05

08:00 – 10:50

1. Feedback on Oslo conference
2. Planning for Seoul conference: *Libraries: Dynamic Engines for the Knowledge and Information Society*
3. Planning for Pre-Conference: Resource Sharing, Reference and Collection Development in a Digital Age – a Practical Approach
4. Brainstorming for Durban: *Libraries for the Future: Progress, Development and Partnerships*
5. Other Business

COLLABORATIVE E-REFERENCE SERVICES LIST

At our midwinter meeting in Rome, members decided to compile a list of collaborative e-ref-services as an extra service at our Open Session in Oslo. The list will be presented on a website and the work will be done by a student at the Royal School of Library and Information Science, Copenhagen.

As it would be impossible to create a complete survey the following criteria will be considered by the selection.

- The services must be collaborative – not run by a single library
- The services must be the most significant in the region
- The services must be of common interest – not concentrating on specific topics
- The services must be heavily used in the region

Section members were asked to help with finding and selecting the appropriate e-ref-services.

The following information was requested about the services:

- Is the service run by public libraries
- Is the service run by national libraries
- Is the service run by public national and/or special libraries in collaboration
- Which kind of communication – virtual, e-mail, chat

For further information, please contact Gitte Larsen, Royal School of Library and Information Science, Copenhagen: gl@db.dk or Bodil Wohnert (SC-member): bwohnert@mail.tdcadls.dk



Reference and Information Services Standing Committee in Buenos Aires

Front row: Concha Lois Cabello, Brigitta Fogelvik, Annsofie Oscarrsson, Cathy Wojewodzki, Jievin Feng
Back row: Petra van den Born, Raymond-Josue Seckel, Martin Kesselman, Amanda Duffy, Bodil Wohnert, Francis T. Kirkwood.

Schedule for Oslo 2005

Saturday 13 August

14:30 – 17:20

Standing Committee on Reference Work Meeting I

Sunday 14 August

13:45 – 15:45

Reference and Information Services Open Program

Virtual Versus Face-2-Face

Reference and Information Services – A Personal Service Delivered to the “Invisible” User Via Library Portals

Friday 19 August

8:00 – 10:50

Standing Committee on Reference Work Meeting II