IFLA CUBA STATEMENT

Statement of Librarians from the United States and Puerto Rico on U.S.—Cuba Relations

We librarians from the United States and Puerto Rico have just completed our productive participation in the 60th conference of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in Havana, Cuba. We were hosted by hundreds of dedicated Cuban librarians from all types of libraries throughout the island. As a group, we feel compelled to give our colleagues and government representatives our observations. We urge a reevaluation of U.S. policy towards Cuba, leading towards normalization of relations.

We have seen first-hand the determination of our Cuban colleagues to advance their library services despite the hardships, shortages, and material limitations they are now experiencing. We have witnessed their determination to safeguard basic gains in education, including library services, in the context of developing aspects of a market economy. We have been deeply impressed by their commitment to common professional objectives and deeply moved by their generosity in hosting librarians from all over the world despite their problems.

It is clear that many of these problems could be alleviated by the end of the U.S. economic blockade against Cuba and the normalization of relations between our two countries. Diplomatic and economic ties between the U.S. and other nations [such as China and Vietnam] with which the U.S. has ideological differences, have been achieved. Why not do the same with Cuba? Normalization would allow the flow of food and medicine into Cuba through trade, reduce the hunger of Cuban people, and stem the tide of those Cubans who are trying to escape these economic hardships by taking to the sea in rafts.

But Cuba will not be the only beneficiary from such a course. U.S. businesses and the American people will benefit from trade, and the prestige of the U.S. in world affairs will be enhanced by its ability to abandon an outdated policy which is universally opposed in the international community.

We have been privileged among U.S. citizens to have the opportunity to visit, research and study library service in Cuba and to confer with colleagues from every continent gathered here. And although we have done this within the guidelines of the U.S. Treasury Department, we have been deeply embarrassed by the senseless restrictions placed on travel here for U.S. citizens. We librarians struggle daily for intellectual freedom and the right to know. These are fundamental principles of our profession and our democratic system. The continuation of a policy which limits the right of U.S. citizens to travel is unworthy of a great nation and contradicts our country's ideals of personal and intellectual freedom and human rights.

In conclusion, we urge our government to seek negotiations with the government of Cuba aimed at normalizing relations, ending the blockade, and reinstituting unfettered travel and exchanges between the people of our two countries.

Nancy D. Anderson [University of Illinois, Urbana]
Mary Ashe [San Francisco, California]
Herbert Biblo [Long Island Resource Council, Stony Brook, New York]
Mary Biblo [University of Chicago Laboratory School, Chicago, Illinois]
Stephen C. Bloom [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania]
Alex Bloss [University of Illinois, Chicago]
Marjorie E. Bloss [Center for Research Libraries, Chicago, Illinois]
Ruth C. Carter [University of Pittsburgh, Wexford, Pennsylvania]
Donald Davis [GSLIS, University of Texas at Austin, Texas]
Dennis Day [Salt Lake City, Utah]
Robert Doyle [Chicago, Illinois]
Charles Elder [California State University, Dominguez Hills, California]
Arol Elliott [University of Arizona, Tuscon]
Monica Ertel [Portale Valley, California]
Adriana A. Fandler [Queens Public Library, New York]
Adele M. Fasick [Toronto, Ontario]
Shirley Fitzgibbons [Bloomington, Indiana]
Barbara J. Ford [Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond]
Judith Lin Hunt [University of Richmond, Virginia]
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Anaba Alemna is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Library and Archival Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.

John Buschman is head of collection development at Rider University in New Jersey, and editor of Critical Approaches to Information Technology in Librarianship, Greenwood Press, 1994.

Barbara Garson is the author of the play MacBird and the books Electronic Sweatshop: How Computers Are Transforming the Office of the Future into the Factory of the Past and All the Livelong Day: The Meaning and Demeaning of Routine Work, both available from Viking Penguin. She was also the Socialist Party’s Vice-Presidential candidate in 1992.

Charles Keller is an artist, teacher and activist living in New York City. From 1945 to 1948 he was art editor for New Masses, and from 1978 to 1988 was editorial cartoonist for the People’s Daily World. He has taught art at Vassar, Hofstra and Parsons School of Design.

Christopher Merrett is Deputy University Librarian at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, and a co-founder of Library and Information Workers Organization, an association of anti-apartheid librarians founded in 1990.

Lance Rose is a member of the Electronic Frontier Foundation and a lawyer specializing in copyright law.

Membership dues for the Progressive Librarians Guild are $15 (low income), $20 (regular membership). Membership includes a subscription to Progressive Librarian. To join, fill out this coupon and send with a check or money order to: Progressive Librarians Guild, P.O. Box 2203, Times Square Station, New York NY 10108. Membership is open to library workers and users who agree with our Statement of Purpose.

Your Name _____________________________
Mailing Address _____________________________
City _____________________________ State ______ Zip ______
Library _____________________________

Do you wish to be listed in the PLG Directory? □ Yes □ No

Please send correspondence and manuscripts to the above address.