

Cultural programs have been a component of our work with the detention center. I have done a map and slide-show presentation on Senegal and have another one on Kenya scheduled as I write this. Bringing other parts of the world to these young men has reverberated in their lives beyond the program. So much of our value system is formed by interaction with a diverse cross-section of world cultures. Without that exposure, we are left in a rather pasteurized, homogenized state of being that is of no help in dealing with the complexities and demands of our work and social activities. We can't live fully if we fail to spend time with diverse communities and establish connections with other cultures and ways of thinking. Yet the young men and women who could benefit so much from outside contact, have few options at gaining access to the outside world. In whatever small way we have addressed this lack at the local facility, we have impacted the lives of the people locked-up there. The interest and gratitude expressed by both prisoners and staff has been heart-warming and inspiring.

An important thing to remember when planning programs with prisons and other detention centers is that consistency and ongoing activities are the most beneficial. Many of these facilities get one-time offers from individuals and community groups, but developing long-term relationships with the prisoners and staff, wherever we can, really helps guide activities in ways that are more in tune with prisoners needs. Book donations or other singular offers are important, but personal contact with a prisoner or prisoners over the long-haul, carries the message that their lives are of value, their rights are respected, their ideas and struggles are heard, and, most of all, that there is someone who wants to spend time with them as an equal partner in an ongoing exchange.

As progressive librarians, we can support and share the work we do; help each other to have a voice in what goes on in this world; give voice to underrepresented peoples, at home and throughout the world; and expose the destructive forces that would deny human rights and social justice through print, electronic media and any other means necessary. The points Mark has offered are meaningful to me, not as form, but as catalyst for action. We're not talking about words on paper here, we're talking about getting out there and doing something to move the world in a better direction for the greatest number of people. It doesn't matter if it's in the office or in the street—we've got to keep doing the work and doing it together. I look forward to hearing about the work of other people in who read this and keeping the ideas flowing freely.

DOCUMENTS

Report on the 66th IFLA General Conference, Jerusalem 13-18 August 2000

by Al Kagan

Jerusalem was perhaps the most controversial IFLA venue in the history of the organization. The status of the city is one of the main contentions in the ongoing peace talks. The Palestinian and other Arab librarians boycotted the meeting and instead convened a conference of the Arab Union for Libraries and Information in Cairo. Although IFLA officials stated that they only learned of the boycott fifteen months before the meeting, the Palestinians claim contesting the venue four years ago, one year after the choice was announced. The IFLA Executive Board issued a statement last year stating that the conference "does not confer any particular recognition or status on that venue." This may be a fine theoretical statement, but it was ignored in practice. In fact, the Opening and Plenary Session presumably arranged by the Israeli Organizing Committee turned out to be an explicit showcase for promoting the politics of the State of Israel. A representative from the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) welcomed us to the "unified capital of the State of Israel." This was in Hebrew, so those without headphones for simultaneous translation missed it. The keynote speaker at the Opening Session is usually a government official who talks about libraries, education, or culture in the host country. This was the first time in my knowledge that the speaker was a political scientist who addressed an overtly political topic, the dramatically changed conditions that have led to the peace process. The talk was given by Shlomo Avineri, Director of the Institute for European Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a former Director-General of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The session was concluded with a choir singing Israeli peace songs.

Although the Palestinians were effectively silenced at the official meeting, the Norwegian Library Association took the lead in bringing a Palestinian

point-of-view to the attendees. A small international group met with Feisal Hussein, the informal mayor of East Jerusalem and the member of the PLO Executive Committee who is in charge of Jerusalem affairs. The group was presented with a statement from the National Conference of Palestinian Librarians which reaffirmed the boycott, noted that the Israeli Government had prevented a workshop for Palestinian librarians, and called for Unesco intervention to maintain the cultural identity of the city. This statement was finally published in the conference newsletter, the *IFLA Express*, on the last day of the meeting. IFLA President, Christine Deschamps, stated at the closing session that the IFLA Executive Board dissociated itself from political incidents during the conference, but claimed that these were beyond the control of the local organizing committee. This was the weakest response possible.

Several other statements were made during the conference in at least two other meetings. I took the opportunity to address the question at both the panel and the business meeting of FAIFE, the Committee on Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression. I asked the following rhetorical questions concerning the Opening Session: Why were we welcomed to the "unified capital of the State of Israel?" Why was it focused on the peace process with only the Israeli point-of-view and no chance for discussion? Why were there Israeli peace songs but no Palestinian peace songs? And in a city with a large Palestinian population, why was there not one word of Arabic? At the FAIFE business meeting, I said that the situation was entirely predictable five years ago, and I asked that FAIFE have some input into future venue decisions.

Although the Israeli Organizing Committee had to promise that all would be welcome in its bid to win the venue, it turns out that visas were denied to many third world librarians. It is notable that the Regional Section on Africa's funded speaker was denied a visa as were a number of other African librarians. Many also suffered long and difficult immigration and customs interrogations, both on arrival in Israel and before takeoff at El Al Airlines facilities at other airports. I observed what appeared to be a typical case of profiling on my arrival, the same kind of treatment that blacks often suffer here in the US.

On the positive side, I am pleased to report a successful meeting of the IFLA Social Responsibilities Discussion Group. There were about 80 people who engaged in a lively discussion around recommendations to IFLA on addressing the growing gap between the information rich and the

information poor, both between countries and within countries. About 30 people have volunteered to work on implementing the recommendations assuming endorsement by the IFLA Professional Board. The recommendations were forwarded to the Professional Board for action at their fall meeting in The Hague.

It was also heartening to find a panel on "Libraries and the WTO." The speakers were Frode Bakken, the current President of the Norwegian Library Association, and Paul Whitney from the Burnaby Public Library in Canada. They explained the excellent IFLA policy on the WTO (which has been endorsed by ALA) and talked about what happened in Seattle. Unfortunately, as opposed to our SRRT panel in Chicago, the spirit of Seattle was not evident in the room. There was also a Guest Lecture on the WTO by Steven Shrybman, also from Canada. He characterized the WTO as the "most powerful organization that has ever existed." For example, he noted that the US has won a case against Canada treating periodicals as commodities, exactly the same way as beer. Local content in Canadian periodicals has no relevance under WTO rules.

There were three notable agenda items at the FAIFE meeting, the recently issued report on the state of libraries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the draft World Report on the state of libraries in various countries and the controversy around the FAIFE report on Cuba. The Bosnia report has been issued as a monograph. It describes the war devastation and offers recommendations for revitalization. The first World Report will be issued next year and will be something like an Amnesty report on the state of libraries. Marta Terry, the President of the Cuban library association, ASCUBI, made an impassioned rebuttal to the FAIFE report condemning Cuban Government repression against the so-called "Independent Librarians." Her remarks will be available in English shortly. I was able to back-up her remarks by referring to the recent trip by US librarians who visited two of these "independent libraries." I noted that they were neither independent nor librarians, and that their small living room collections of books distributed by the US Interest Section in Havana did not function as libraries.

On a personal note, I would like to thank Margo Brault who told me about the wonderful Jerusalem Hotel and their Alternative Tours. This small, decorative and warm Palestinian Hotel served as my home away from home in East Jerusalem, provided me with wonderful food in their garden restaurant, helped me attend the exquisite Jerusalem Festival for Arabic Music and Jazz, and provided me with political tours to Gaza and The West

Bank. A tour of a refugee camp in Gaza was an experience I will not easily forget. I did learn more about the Medical Library in Gaza, and I hope we can follow-up on our proposed aid project. It was quite a trip.

Al Kagan
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Circle of Studies about Political Librarianship MEXICO

Founders: Filipe Meneses Tello, Julia González Valencia, Celso Martínez Muciño; Martin Vera Cabañas (mvera69@yahoo.com)

Mission: In Mexico, libraries and information centers are generally institutions which have been created and developed without a national tradition and they primarily imitate library practices from First World countries. Regretfully libraries have been used only for political purposes or to promote political campaigns. Because of this Mexican libraries don't have an appropriate plan of development.

We are conscious that libraries and information centers are often created without a clear commitment to the social classes they must serve. We also think that libraries have become one of the principle sources that globalization has used to reinforce its power.

Since library education in Mexico is based on a technical and managerial model, Mexican librarians don't realize the importance of linking librarianship with major fields like politics and sociology among others. Their participation and resistance against unilateral decisions is scarcely visible.

Recognizing that democratic libraries and information centers contribute to the change of social structures, our group is founded to promote a real participation of the Mexican library community in political and social scenes of librarianship as well as to support social movements and non-governmental groups that fight for a Mexico with justice and social equality.

Program for International Progressive Librarianship

by Mark Rosenzweig

- 1** We shall work towards an international agenda as the basis of common action of librarians everywhere actively committed, as librarians, to social justice, equality, human welfare, and the development of cultural democracy.
- 2** We will unite librarians and information workers in opposition to the marketization of public goods, to privatization of social resources and to outsourcing of services and will oppose international treaties and institutions which advance destructive neo-liberal policies.
- 3** We insist on the equality of access to and inclusiveness of information services, especially extending such services to the poor, marginalized and discriminated against, including the active solidarity-based provision of information assistance to these groups and their advocates in their struggles.
- 4** We shall encourage the exploration of alternative models of human services; promote and disseminate critical analysis of information technology's impact on libraries and societies; and support the democratization of existing institutions of education, culture, communications.
- 5** We shall undertake joint, interdisciplinary research into fundamental library issues (e.g. into the political economy of information in the age of neo-liberalism and corporate globalization) in order to lay the basis for effective action in our spheres of work.
- 6** We will support cooperative collection, organization and preservation of the documents of people's struggles and the making available of alternative materials representing a wide range of progressive viewpoints often excluded as resources from the debates of our times.
- 7** We will investigate and organize efforts to make the library-as-workplace more democratic and encourage resistance to the managerialism of the present library culture.
- 8** We will lead in promoting international solidarity among librarians and cooperation between libraries across borders on the basis of our joint commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related covenants which create a democratic framework for constructive cooperative endeavors.
- 9** We will organize in common with other cultural and educational progressives, to help put issues of social responsibility on the agendas of international bodies such as IFLA and UNESCO.
- 10** We shall oppose corporate globalization which, despite its claims, reinforces existing social, economic, cultural inequalities, and insist on a democratic globalism and internationalism which respects and cultivates cultural plurality, which recognizes the sovereignty of peoples, which acknowledges the obligations of society to the individual and communities, prioritizing human values and needs over profits.