

Going International

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Notes on the impact of IFLA on the Finnish research library field seen through the International Relations Group (IRG) of the Finnish Research Library Association (FRLA).

Since its foundation in 1927, IFLA - the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions has been an invaluable forum for Finnish academic and research libraries for opening up to the global library field, keeping up with international issues, and liaising with other libraries in the world. Looking at IFLA as an international association, we can see it as a forum for keeping *Libraries on the agenda*, for building relations with library associations in other countries. Looking at IFLA conferences, we can see them as forums for meeting international experts, exchanging ideas with them, for giving papers, testing research projects and innovations among many others developed in different parts of the world – for working together for international library and information issues.

IFLA greatly enhanced the foundation of the Finnish Research Library Association – FRLA in 1929, as well as the setting up of the Association's International Relations Group – IRG in 1991. The founding records of the Finnish Research Library Association were destroyed by the bombings of Helsinki in the Second World War, in February 1944, but library historians have found evidence that the Finnish Research Library Association became a member of IFLA in 1931, and it could then select a representative of its own for IFLA conferences to serve the interests of its members, particularly those in research libraries. So, the promotion of international con-



Photo: Päivi Pekkarinen

IFLA Seoul, 2006.

tacts and cooperation has been considered of vital importance for the Finnish Research Library Association (1).

For nearly eighty years, members of the Finnish Research Library Association have been involved in IFLA. To begin with they were few, mainly chief librarians. Within the years, however, the number has grown and the interest has widened – as it happened after the IFLA Helsinki Conference in 1965, and after the IFLA 50th Anniversary Conference in Brussels in 1977. But especially in the 1990s with internationalization and globalization at the wake of the Internet, more and more Finnish academic and research librarians have served on IFLA committees, sections and working groups – have been messengers of new trends, new developments and kept Finnish academic and research libraries in the forefront of international developments.

The impact of IFLA on the Finnish Research Library field

We may say it all started with the IFLA Stockholm Conference in 1990.

Three internationally active librarians *Kyllikki Ruokonen* and *Eeva-Liisa Lehtonen*, Helsinki School of Economics, and *Heli Myllys*, Agricultural Library, University of Helsinki, formed a working group to coordinate a trip to the IFLA Stockholm Conference. Soon other IFLA activists, *Eeva-Maija Tammekann*, Library of Parliament and *Hellevi Yrjölä*, Library of Statistics, joined the “group”, and the International Relation Group – IRG became an official Working Group of the Finnish Research Association - FR-LA in 1991.

The mandate of the IRG strengthened with the wave of internationalization in the mid 1990s: international activities were defined as one of the focal areas for the Association and its divisions and working groups (2).

Our Members

The founding members of the IRG of the FRLA were all prominent chief librarians and IFLA activists, members of IFLA sections of their speciality. Within the years the IRG has changed from a group of chief librarians into a group of expert librarians with interest in and experience of international issues. Now we a group of ten experienced and enthusiastic experts, and would welcome some younger colleagues to join us.

The IRG members have come from all types of research libraries:

National Library of Finland
Sirkka Havu, Eeva Murtomaa

Special libraries

Library of Statistics – *Anja Törmä*
Library of Finnish Road Administration –
Sirpa Haapamäki

University libraries

Helsinki Swedish School of Economics Library
– *Maria Schröder*,
Helsinki University of Technology Library –
Sinikka Koskiala,

Helsinki University Libraries, e.g. Faculty of Law Library - *Gunilla Häkli*,

Library of Behavioural Sciences – *Tuula Ruhanen*,

National Library of Health Sciences – *Päivi Pekkarinen*

Viikki Science Library – *Teodora Oker-Blom*

Tampere University Library – *Maija Ikonen*,
Leena Toivonen

Åbo Akademi Library – *Björn Dahla*, *Eva Costiander-Huldén*

Our Mission

The mission of the IRG is

- To promote international relations, and through them, to promote international cooperation and collaboration, global sharing and understanding in the field of library and information profession;
- To enhance their impact on library and information services in Finland and in other countries.

The mission of the IRG becomes actions for example

- When we provide forums for current events in the international library and information field, in particular through our contacts with IFLA;
- When we invite important international library and information experts;
- When we organize international seminars, conferences, workshops;
- When we take part in international working groups, in particular those of IFLA;
- When we give statements on international library and information issues.

Our work with IFLA

We participate in the work of IFLA sections and working groups. Our members have served on the standing committees of the following sections

- Management of Library Associations
- Cataloguing
- Bibliography

- Classification and Indexing
- Information literacy
- Rare Books and Manuscripts
- Health and Biosciences Libraries
- Science and technology libraries
- Social Science libraries
- Government information and official publications
- Reference and information services

Our work with Finnish Research Library Association

We share and disseminate our IFLA experience.

We build IFLA awareness by organizing and coordinating

- IFLA information events
- International seminars and workshops
- International issues of Finnish Research Library Association journal *Signum*

IFLA Information Events

We organize IFLA Information Events in the context of Spring meetings of the Association for members interested in participating in the forth-

coming IFLA conference, sometimes with invited experts and researchers throwing light on the culture and history of the IFLA conference city, sometimes with IFLA specialists, as in 2007: the IFLA Event was extended into an IFLA Information Forum with two representatives from IFLA *Sjoerd Koopman*, the Coordinator of Professional activities, and *Cynthia Mouanda*, the IFLA Membership Manager,

International seminars and workshops

Since 2000 we have organized or participated in organizing eight seminars on different themes:

- Library buildings and learning spaces
- Knowledge organization, bibliographic control and conceptual models
- Collections and collection development policies

The seminars have been very popular, and most of them have gathered c. one hundred delegates due to distinguished international speakers known from their IFLA context.

Library buildings and learning spaces

Biblioteksbyggnaden: Byggnadens inverkan på arbetsmiljön – miljös inverkan på byggnaden, in Helsinki 7–9 June 2001.

(Participated in organizing) The IFLA Oslo satellite conference

The Physical Library and Beyond – the Library as Place and the Library in Cyberspace held in Järvenpää, 11–12 August, 2005.

Knowledge organization

A Finnish-Italian conference *Convergence on Memory Institutions – Finnish-Italian Seminar on the Collaboration of Libraries, Archives and Museums in the Organization of Knowledge* at the Finnish Institute in Rome, Villa Lante, with the sponsorship of the Wihuri Foundation, held 14–16th November 2002.

(Participated in organizing) The IFLA Oslo satellite conference, sponsored by IFLA Cataloguing Section, *Biblioteca Universalis – How to Organise Chaos? FRBR, a New Effort to Organise Content,*

and Some Practical Applications, held in Järvenpää, 11–12 August, 2005.

The Challenge of the Electronic Environment to the Organization of Knowledge - an International Seminar on Subject Access to Information, which took place in Helsinki, 19–20 April 2004, with the sponsorship of the Finnish Ministry of Education.

The Challenge of the Electronic Environment to the Organization of Knowledge – Second International Seminar on Subject Access to Information – Helsinki, 29–30th November 2007, with the sponsorship of Suomen Kirjasäätiö (the Finnish Book Foundation) (3).

Collections and collection development policies

International Seminar on Collection Mapping, Helsinki 27–28th November 2005 in collaboration with the Council of Finnish Research Libraries, the National Library of Finland, the National Repository Library, and the IFLA Acquisition and Collection Development Section.

Featuring the Digital Future – seminar on mass digitization, scholar collaboration, and managing the content of digital collections, held in Helsinki, 20th November 2008.

International issues of the FRLA journal Signum

The results of the seminars and workshops have featured in our Association journal Signum making up an international issue to be distributed at IFLA, when appropriate, and in other international library events among international colleagues. Since 2000 we have composed and coordinated six international issues in cooperation with the Signum Editorial Board.

Meetings with IFLA Presidents and President-Elects

In October 2003, IRG members discussed with *Kay Raseroka*, IFLA President 2003–2005, about her presidential theme *Lifelong learning* over a dinner at the Kosmos, hosted by the Finnish Research Library Association.

In May 2005 IRG members attended a session given by *Alex Byrne*, IFLA President 2005–2007, on the new structure of IFLA at the Library of the Behavioural Sciences, University of Helsinki.

In April 2008, IRG members convened to discuss with *Ellen Tise*, IFLA President-Elect 2007–2009, about her presidential theme *Libraries driving access to knowledge* over a dinner at the Elite, hosted by the FRLA and the IRG.

IFLA as an inexhaustible source of inspiration for international relations – for global understanding

We, the members of the International Relations Group of the Finnish Research Association, have realized how we can really make a difference on the national and international, on the local and global library scene by being involved in IFLA, by being empowered by IFLA – by “working locally for a global cause”. 📖



Photo: Päivi Pekkarinen

Members of the FRBR-FRSAR Working Group, Montreal, prior to the IFLA Quebec City 2008 meeting. From right to left: Pat Riva, Athena Salaba, Marcia Zeng, Jonathan Furner, Lois Mai Chan, Maja Zumer, Diane Vizine-Goetz.

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This feature is based on the presentation given at the IFLA seminar “IFLA and Libraries in the World”, Helsinki, Auditorium of the Annex of Parliament, 13th January 2009, for promoting Helsinki as a candidate for the IFLA Annual Congress 2012 in the context of the visit by Jennefer Nicholson IFLA Secretary General to Helsinki. <http://lib.eduskunta.fi/Resource.phx/kirjasto/organisaa-tio/tapahtumat/ifla-seminaari.htx>

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