Undoubtedly most of you already know that there was a small battle on the floor of Membership at San Francisco over the question of whether a firm doing business with South Africa should be banned by a city from doing business with that city's many agencies. Briefly, the situation was this: the director of a major library came to the Intellectual Freedom Committee to tell the committee that he was unable to buy the Wall Street Journal and assorted other important materials for the library because the owners would not sign an affidavit saying they did not do business with South Africa. In actual fact, the situation is much more complicated than that, but that is the essence.

The resolution introduced by JoAnne South and myself asked ALA membership to reaffirm the Association's commitment to the First Amendment and the freedom of patrons to have access to a wide range of materials. We lost.

While it is never pleasant to lose a battle, especially when one is termed a racist for raising the issue, in this case the battle was worth fighting to discover the depth of the lack of commitment to the principles inherent in the Library Bill of Rights by a majority of members bothering to attend membership meetings. We were not talking about the evils of apartheid; we were talking about the First Amendment rights of United States' citizens. To hear a member of the opposition say that if we had to give up some of our First Amendment rights to support our oppressed brothers and sisters, then so be it, was eye-opening. Perhaps the ALA store at the next conference will be selling bumper stickers reading The Oppressed Shall Free the Oppressed. Just how limiting our own freedoms will help others achieve theirs is a mystery beyond my comprehension.

Another lesson to be learned from the debate is that when the opposition cannot find a logical stance, it is best to call your opponents names and to question their integrity, commitment to principles, and sensitivity to the suffering of others. It happens
in all censorship fights: to buy a book explaining the pros of abortion makes one a baby-killer; to show a film depicting the United States as less than perfect is to be a tool of the Communists. Etc. Etc. Etc.

Presumably, those of you who pay your dues to the Intellectual Freedom Round Table do so because you believe that libraries exist to allow patrons to have access to a wide range of materials so they may make up their own minds on vital issues and be better informed citizens of our democracy. Not all of you are able to attend the annual conferences, but it would be helpful if you would talk with colleagues who are attending, to stress to them that the time slots set aside for Membership meetings are not free of other meetings as an invitation to go out on the town, but the opportunity to have a say in the Association's business.

Recently I had a letter from a conservative librarian in the southwest who talked about the leftist leanings of ALA. I told him he was part of the problem. People who sit on the sidelines and let the most cherished principles of librarianship go down the drain can, of course, exercise their free speech by complaining, but it would be far more helpful if they would lend their voices and votes to the battle.

The Intellectual Freedom community within ALA is not the radical group within the Association. We are the true conservatives, doing battle to preserve/conserve the fundamental principles the Founding Fathers felt necessary to spell out in the First Amendment. No cause, however worthy, should lead us to surrender our basic right to free speech. Conversely, no cause, however abhorrent, should have its defenders' voices silenced because we do not like the message. A librarian who does not believe those two basic principles will find him/herself without a leg to stand on when the censor knocks.

Dorothy M. Broderick

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IFRT BECOMES LARGEST ROUND TABLE IN ALA

Now it is official! The August 31 membership statistics confirm that IFRT, with 1407 members, is the largest of ALA's round tables. It passed GODORT 'in membership this past year. The latter now has a membership of 1377.

While both units grew during 1986/87, IFRT grew faster. IFRT membership rose by 5.2%, a gain of seventy members. The roster of GODORT increased by 1.5%, a gain of 20. It is clear from these statistics that every member counts!

IFRT membership currently has 141 institutional and 1266 personal members.
An important and easy way to keep IFRT growing is to see that membership brochures are distributed at state library association meetings. Please request your supply from Patrice McDermott, IFRT Staff Liaison, Office for Intellectual Freedom, ALA. A call to her will suffice.* Please also communicate any new membership promotion ideas you may have to the 1987/88 membership chair, Mr. Christopher F. Bowen, Assistant Librarian, Downers Grove Public Library, 1050 Curtiss Street, Downers Grove, IL 60515.

Laurence Miller, past chair, Membership.

*ALA toll free phone no.: 800-545-2433

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**IFRT MEMBERS URGED TO REMEMBER MERRITT FUND**

The LeRoy C. Merritt Humanitarian Fund, established as a special trust by Mary Merritt in memory of her husband, exists to provide financial assistance to librarians whose jobs are in jeopardy because of their support of intellectual freedom. The Fund's interpretation of intellectual freedom includes, but is not limited to, the freedom of librarians to exercise their free speech rights and the freedom to choose items for their collections.

Dr. Merritt (author of Book Selection and Intellectual Freedom and editor from 1962-1970 of the Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom) was the first winner of the Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award. The Fund established in his name is administered by a board of three trustees who are elected by the donors. Contributions are not tax exempt and may be used without compliance with the IRS rules for tax-exempt organizations. Though donors do not get tax deductions, they have the satisfaction of knowing that they are providing direct financial assistance to colleagues whose employment in the profession is being threatened or who have been fired.

IFRT Report is including a form you may use to send in your contribution. To receive more information about the Fund or to request aid from the Fund, you should write to the same address: LeRoy C. Merritt Humanitarian Fund, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611.

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**I WANT TO SUPPORT THE MERRITT HUMANITARIAN FUND!!!** (Make check payable to LeRoy C. Merritt Humanitarian Fund)

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**ADDRESS**

Street__________________________Apt.____________________

City__________________________State____________________Zip_________________

Mail to: Merritt Humanitarian Fund, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611
Laurence Miller is looking for a few good ideas for the 1989 program in Dallas. Please contact him before December 1: Laurence Miller, Director of Libraries, Florida International University, Tamiami Campus, Miami Florida 33199. Phone (305) 554-2461.

The IFRT is working on a self-contained multi-media packet of materials on intellectual freedom. We would like to have ten or twelve packets available for loan to school systems, libraries, etc. If you have suggestions for books, articles or non-print materials, if you have questions or can furnish material for a case study, please contact Dorothy M. Broderick, 3936 West Colonial Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA, 23452 (804) 498-3693.

Houston Ordinance Unconstitutional? (excerpted from a letter from Mary Hutchings Reed of Sidley and Austin to Judith Krug)

...[T]he Ordinance is arguably unconstitutional with respect to both the First Amendment and the foreign relations provisions of the Constitution. The foreign affairs arguments appear to be the stronger of the two.

...Two well-established foreign relations doctrines may prevent the city of Houston from enforcing the Ordinance. The first is the commerce clause doctrine which may be used to strike down state interference with interstate or foreign commerce, even absent federal regulation. The second involves the exclusivity of federal power in the sphere of foreign affairs.

...The basic idea behind both of these doctrines in the context of foreign commerce is that no subdivision of the Union should be able to act independently so as to affect the whole. To allow such action by the states would leave nations attempting to deal with the United States facing a myriad of laws and requirements...

(1st Amendment) The HPL should argue that First Amendment rights both to distribute and to receive information are violated by the Ordinance. The Ordinance limits the publishers with which the HPL can do business on the basis of whether a particular publisher is able to sign the required affidavit...Furthermore, the publishers themselves may in effect be penalized for choosing to do business with South Africa or Namibia. Thus, the publishers' right to freely distribute information will be impaired.

In summary, although there are some obstacles in challenging the validity of the Ordinance, we believe that strong arguments can be made against its constitutionality.