Report From The Chair

This year has been an eventful one for the defense of intellectual freedom and the freedom of inquiry in libraries. The FBI's Library Awareness Program has compelled librarians everywhere to consider the important responsibilities they bear in these two areas. It is arguable that the threat has strengthened librarian sensitivity and resolve.

I had the privilege of representing the Round Table at the joint conference of the Southeastern and Virginia Library Associations October 28 in Norfolk. The program attracted a capacity crowd, local press coverage, and a great deal of interest not only in the Library Awareness Program but in ALA's Intellectual Freedom activities. With me on the program was Natalie Robins, author of "The FBI's Invasion of Libraries," an article that appeared in The Nation.

Those committed to the maintenance of intellectual freedom are not always among those most interested in creating and maintaining organizations that carry this work forward. It is therefore satisfying to be able to say that great progress has been made, and is being made, to make the Intellectual Freedom Round Table not only the largest but also the most effective in the American Library Association. That work will continue at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Washington.

The Membership Promotion Committee, chaired by Chris Bowen, will continue the work that has helped to make the IFRT ALA's largest by an increasing margin. They are also working to arrange a joint reception with JMRT in Dallas in the interest of increasing awareness of and involvement in ALA's intellectual freedom effort. Barbara Jones, past IFRT Chair, will be meeting with the Coalition Building Task Force to study whether this effort is a productive one for the Round Table and if it is, how it should be pursued. The improved format of this newsletter is, I believe, indicative of the fine work of Publications Committee Chair Scott Kass and Beth Rile. The Organization and Bylaws Committee, under the leadership of John Swan, will continue with the task of developing a Procedures Manual for the Round Table for publication by Annual Conference. The meetings of these committees of Midwinter are open and you are invited and urged to attend. That is the best path to future involvement in the work of the Round Table.

One of the great strengths of IFRT is its effective awards program. These include the SIRS State Program Award, given for the best project or program by a State Intellectual Freedom Committee; the Immoth Memorial Award, which honors notable contributions to intellectual freedom and demonstrations of personal courage in defense of freedom of expression; and the Eli Oboler Memorial Award, given every two years to the best contribution to the literature of intellectual freedom.

I hope to see you at one of the IFRT Executive Committee meetings or at another of the intellectual freedom working sessions listed elsewhere in this issue.
The Intellectual Freedom Round Table, The Biggest And Still Growing!

The Intellectual Freedom Round Table grew 10.4% this past year, adding 147 members. IFRT remains the largest round table in the American Library Association. IFRT now has 1,554 members (1,398 personal members and 156 institutional members). GODORT, with 1,381 members, and LIRT, with 1,118, are the next two largest round tables.

As exciting as this growth is, though, it represents only 3.3% of the total membership of ALA. The question remains: Why aren't the other 46,000 librarians members of IFRT? In the coming year the round table will offer a $1.00 membership for first year members. We hope this will encourage more ALA members to give the IFRT a try.

Christopher Bowen

IFRT/JMRT Reception For New Members

IFRT will host a reception in Dallas to give members an opportunity to learn more about intellectual freedom organizations in ALA. The intellectual freedom committees of the various divisions of the association will be invited to send a resource person and informational materials to the reception. Those attending will be able to learn more about the activities of each group and find out how to become involved in the intellectual freedom activities of the association. Refreshments will be provided and a cash bar available. JMRT is co-sponsoring this event.

Christopher Bowen

Freedom To Read Foundation

Organized in 1969, the Freedom To Read Foundation provides financial and legal assistance to libraries, librarians, and other persons and institutions who are resisting abridgments of the First Amendment. The Foundation also monitors and fights repressive legislation by challenging the constitutionality of laws inhibiting the full exercise of First Amendment freedoms.

The Freedom To Read Foundation meets twice each year immediately preceding the midwinter and annual meetings of the American Library Association. The Foundation is governed by an elected Board of Trustees. American Library Association units send nonvoting representatives to Foundation meetings. Fran McDonald represents the Intellectual Freedom Round Table.

Membership in the Foundation is shockingly low, even among intellectual freedom activists such as members of IFRT. Dues of the Foundation are surprisingly low, even for intellectual freedom activists such as members of IFRT. If you still have not demonstrated your commitment to intellectual freedom, 1989 is the year to begin. Membership dues of $25 may be sent to the Freedom To Read Foundation, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611, or bring your check with you to midwinter.

Frances McDonald
The Subject Is Subjects

Perhaps I am alone in wishing that the technical services branches of this profession could be more involved in the discussions about intellectual freedom and access. After all, the attempts by IFRT to establish a liaison position with the Resources and Technical Services Division's Subject Access Committee (SAC) were politely rebuffed. SAC was convinced that there was no need for input on this issue. The persistence of those who, like Sanford Berman, continually point out the real-life problems encountered by library users and library staff attempting to relate the sometimes Byzantine rules of cataloging, classification and subject analysis to the needs of today's information seekers makes me wonder, however, if this is not an issue of some importance.

While I do not always agree with Mr. Berman's proposed solutions to some of the admittedly obvious problems he raises (I feel, for example, that there is little need to emphasize the English-language catalog in an increasingly bilingual country), I think it worth our time to be aware of the causes of discontent. Surely others also wonder why, for example, the Library of Congress assumes that our patrons will search for information about child abuse under the word "adult" (as in "Adult victims of child abuse").

For more information, you can write to Sanford Berman at the Hennepin County Public Library and request information on the Cataloging Consumer's Network.

B.B. Rile

The LeRoy C. Merritt Humanitarian Fund

As the IFRT Liaison to the Merritt Fund deliberations, let me convey to you what I've learned thus far about its purpose and operation.

Dr. Merritt was a distinguished public and college librarian with twenty-four years as a library school professor and dean. Because of his devotion to First Amendment issues, he was editor of Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom from 1962-1970, and the first recipient of the Downs Intellectual Freedom Award. He was one of those colleagues who "did it all"—publishing, teaching, and advocacy in addition to working in libraries.

The Fund was established in 1970 to provide financial assistance to librarians whose jobs are on the line due to their support of intellectual freedom issues. In 1975 the scope was extended to cases of suspected sexism and racism.

For some reason, this fund hasn't received the visibility it deserves. After all, it has provided direct financial aid to many librarians "fighting the good fight." I'll be interested to attend my first Trustees' meeting in Washington and report back to you. (There are 300 people on the mailing list, but only 135 contributed last year!) Maybe we can get the ball rolling!

Barbara Jones

Eli M. Oboler Memorial Award

This is a biennial award of $500 presented to the author or authors of an article (including a review article), a series of thematically connected articles, a book, or a manual, published on the local, state, or national level, in English or in English translation. The works to be considered must have as their central concern one or more issues, events, questions, or controversies in the area of intellectual freedom, including matters of ethical, political, or social concerns related to intellectual freedom. The work or works need not have appeared in the "library press," nor have been written by a librarian. The work must have been published within the two-year period ending the December prior to the ALA Annual Conference at which the award is given. The award in donated by HBW Associates, Inc.

Sue Kamm

IFRT State Program Award

The IFRT State Program Award is presented each year to the state intellectual freedom committee that has implemented the most successful and creative intellectual freedom project. The $1,000 award, funded by the Social Issues Resources Series, Inc. (SIRS), honors one-time/one-year, or ongoing/multi-year projects.

Eligible projects may be one-time/one-year or ongoing/multi-year. Examples include: an exemplary public relations program to promote awareness of intellectual freedom; effective assistance in an intellectual freedom crisis; successful coalition-building projects and activities; or innovative reorganization and management of an intellectual freedom committee.

The award was first presented to the South Carolina Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee at the 1984 ALA Annual Conference, in Dallas.

Other recipients are North Carolina, New York, Indiana, and Wisconsin.

Pamela G. Bonnell

John Phillip Immroth Award


Frances McDonald
Thursday, January 5
Freedom to Read Foundation
Board of Trustees
2:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m.
SHER-Baltimore

Friday, January 6
Freedom to Read Foundation
Board of Trustees
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
SHER-Richmond/Arlington

Saturday, January 7
Intellectual Freedom Committee
8:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
OMNI-Council
IFRT Organization and Bylaws Committee
See Program
PLA Intellectual Freedom Committee
2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
MAY-Maryland
AASL Intellectual Freedom Committee
2:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m.
MAY-Massachusetts
ALSC Intellectual Freedom Committee
2:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m.
SHER-Cotillion Ballroom, T-46
YASD Intellectual Freedom Committee
2:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m.
SHEA - Cotillion Ballroom, T-7

Sunday, January 8
IFC/IFRT/Div. IFCs Joint Meeting
8:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.
SHER-Woodley
IFRT Membership Promotion Committee
9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.
SHER-Cotillion Ballroom, T-3
Committee on Professional Ethics
2:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m.
HIL-DuPONT

Monday, January 9
YASD Intellectual Freedom Committee
8:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.
OMNI-Governor's
ALSC Intellectual Freedom Committee
2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
SHER-Kansas
IFRT Executive Committee
2:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m.
SHER-Rockville

Tuesday, January 10
IFRT Executive Committee
11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
HIL-Caucus Room
Committee on Professional Ethics
11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
SHER-Congressional

Intellectual Freedom Round Table

North Miami Campus Library
Florida International University
North Miami, Florida 33181