IFRT Tops 2000!

Laureen Drapp, Membership Chair

The October, 1990, statistics are in—and they show IFRT membership at 2033! Total membership last year at this time was 1694—that’s a 20% increase! During October, IFRT welcomed 55 new and 23 renewed members—of these, 35 are student members. Whether new, renewed, regular or student, institution or trustee, IFRT membership growth continues to show the commitment of our profession to intellectual freedom and First Amendment rights. We look forward to continued growth and success!

How pleased we were...

Christopher Bowen, IFRT Chair

As I began to think about writing this message, my library had just completed a month of displays and activities on banned books. It was encouraging to see what a library might do with ideas from the OIF banned books week material, a little imagination, and not too much money.

Our artist adapted an idea mentioned in Publishers Weekly and arranged a display case of empty, dusty shelves and bookends with the message, “If all the books that someone wanted to ban were removed from the library, this is what would be left.” Displays in adult and children’s departments featured books that have been banned. Next to the Circulation Desk was a display of the First Amendment, with a place for visitors to sign their names in support of freedom of speech. A state representative (not up for re-election) saw our publicity and offered to do a reading of Dr. Seuss’ The Lorax, a favorite of the representative’s family. In addition to a lot of positive comments from patrons, we received excellent coverage in both local newspapers, including a glowing editorial praising the library for its efforts. It really made one feel like Mr./Ms. Intellectual Freedom. Then they started.

“I like your displays and I feel funny complaining about a book during banned books week, but…” The head of children’s services was able to defuse several complaints about children’s books. A patron who is extremely concerned about pornography and homosexuality has become a regular visitor to my office. So far, he is more interested in talking about his concerns than actually doing anything about them. Finally, a patron initiated a formal complaint about a book on AIDS.

Of course this patron is a good guy. The book presents a very negative view of gay lifestyles and an extremely conservative approach to the AIDS crisis. In fact, it represents almost exactly the views of my regular anti-obscenity visitor. I was not able to satisfy this patron and she will very likely request a hearing with the library board about this book.

I have to wonder, did our banned books activity give people the idea that they should complain about books? Possibly, although we did have an incredible harvest moon at the same time. I am pretty sure that the most serious complaints were motivated by sincere beliefs and would likely have occurred anyway.

During the interesting times to come, I hope that we, library staff and board, remember how pleased we were with the community’s response to Banned Books Week. We certainly intend to do similar activities next year, though I do think I will forget one idea offered by a colleague on the IFRT executive committee. She liked the idea of asking library patrons to add their nominations to a list of books they would like to ban if they could. That’s a can of worms I do not want to open.

By the way, what did you do for banned books week?

Bill of Rights Bicentennial Resource Book

Similar to the Banned Books Week packets, ALA will have available posters, program ideas, quotes, and other materials on the Bill of Rights. ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom can give you more details if you are interested.
Curling up with a good book?


Subject to change...

For years, Sylvia Turchyn of Indiana University Libraries has been trying to represent the IFRT as our liaison to the Subject Analysis Committee of the Cataloging and Classification Section of the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services. It has been frustrating and Sylvia would like to know if the membership really feels the need to continue to ask to be sent the mailings to attend meetings, to express over and over again our desire to be part of their deliberations and to be advised of their decisions. If you are a member of ALCTS, you have an interest in current subject analysis systems or in the proposed subject code, or if you just feel that so large a division as ALCTS should have some representation from the IF community, please write Sylvia. Her address is Assistant Head, Cataloging, Indiana University Libraries, Bloomington, IN 47405.

Attending Mid-winter?

Christopher Bowen, IFRT Chair

IFRT members and interested non-members are invited to attend the meetings of the IFRT Executive Board and committees. Not only do ALA regulations require that all meetings be open to members, but the IFRT welcomes visitors. You are welcome to observe or, in most cases, join in the discussion. After all, the IFRT is the membership. With the exception of some discussions relating to awards, IFRT committee meetings are also open to visitors.

IFRT Executive Committee:
Sun., Jan. 13, 1991, 2:00-5:30 PM

Coalition Building Committee:
Sun., Jan. 13, 1991, 11:30 AM-12:30 PM

Immmoth Award Committee:
Sun., Jan. 13, 1991, 9:00-11:00 AM

Membership Promotion Committee:
Mon., Jan. 14 1991, 9:30-11:00 AM

Ohio Library Association Postpones Library Confidentiality Law Request

A draft of the Legislative Platform for OLA states: At this time, the Ohio Library Association will not actively pursue a legislative remedy for confidentiality of library records. Additionally, the Ohio Library Association will continue to educate legislators as the opportunity arises and will actively oppose any legislation contrary to confidentiality of library records. (The passage of such policies by a large percentage of library boards in Ohio will lay the groundwork for a legislative solution at a later date.)

Ohio IFRT members who want to know more or who want to assist in the process can contact OLA in Columbus, Ohio or write Deborah O’Connor, Chair, Legislation Committee, Geauga County Public Library, 121 South Street, Chardon, OH 44024.

In-Basket

With this issue, we are initiating a “short story” section to include news sent from the field to the members of the Publications Committee. This is in response to a request for more news of this type in the Report. If you are aware of local IP programming or problems, of cleverly-constructed solutions to difficult problems, of legislation or litigation, please contact one of the members of the committee (Tom Budlong, Christie Koontz, Paul Vermouth) or write to the editor (Beth Rile, Wright Memorial Public Library, 1776 Far Hills Avenue, Dayton (Oakwood) OH 45419-2598). Deadline for the next issue is 10 May 1991.
Program Planning for 1992 Annual Conference

Frances McDonald, Chair-Elect

The year of a Chair-Elect is spent watching, listening, planning, jotting down ideas, and for IFRT chair-elect, thinking about the major intellectual freedom program for Annual Conference. For a decade, I observed the program planning process, first, as a member of the Intellectual Freedom Committee when IFC planned the program. Then, after IFC decided to move program planning to the Intellectual Freedom Round Table, I participated with others at Joint IFC, IFRT, and Division IFCs meetings when the annual program was the topic of discussion. I listened to, and sometimes contributed, provocative ideas, controversial ideas, practical ideas, theoretical ideas, cutting edge ideas, and sometimes, silly, but fun, ideas, when we all ran out of reasonable ideas. Now it is my turn. As others have before, I want the most stunning program ever.

With all that historical background, planning the program should be a snap. Think about previous programs. I remember Dorothy Broderick’s communication program (who could ever forget the heat in Dallas?), Barbara Jones’ AIDS Information program in San Francisco, MPAA rating codes in Los Angeles, video programming, killing the messenger. From ages ago, I remember Barbara Bryant’s heart-stopping response from the audience to the suggestion that librarians restrict racially biased materials to protect Black kids. Remember how we all admired Steven Pico when he addressed us? Remember standing room only when Cal Thomas was on the program, and again when Judy Blume was part of a panel, and lots of space, unfortunately, when William North delivered his gatekeeper message?

Over the years I absorbed criteria for selecting a program—or, perhaps I am just imagining them and creating criteria now. The program topic must be current, crucial, and communicate information ALA members want and need to know. The program must be provocative, painful, and provide information ALA members do not want to hear. The program must be unique, urgent, and uncompromising in presenting our principles. The program must be appropriate, appealing, and attract a large audience. In other words, the best possible program would be on an issue of current concern that generates a fair amount of controversy, with a big name speaker to attract a large audience, that says something to children’s, adult, and reference librarians, catalogers and networkers, trustees and library administrators, and that gives ALA members their annual booster shot of IF information and values.

So, what is your chair-elect considering for 1992?

- 1492-1992—Columbus discovering America. Something there?
- San Francisco, unique city, West Coast. Anything?
- Ghosts, goblins, witches, and cults in libraries: New Age Information or religious proselytizing?
- FBI Library Awareness. Or have we heard and read enough?
- Fee or free, the cost of information?
- Government information, availability or lack of.
- Does Age belong in the Library Bill of Rights? Appropriate, following on the heels of the 1991 Rights of Children program but might be overkill.
- National Information policy, impact of technology on freedom of information? Could we jazz that up enough?
- Funding the National Endowment for the Arts leading to government regulation of the arts.
- Social responsibility? Gay and Lesbian literature.
- Cultural sensitivity?
- Pat Schuman’s President’s theme, “Your Right to Know: Librarians Make it Happen.” Recently, I heard an attorney say that librarians are surrogates for the public in protecting their right to receive information. Was that a full-blown theory, or was he only saying something nice to his audience? Maybe a pep talk is what we need.
- Any major IF issues from the White House Conference? Who could predict?

Top contenders: 1) Fees, 2) Witches and Cults, and 3) Librarians protecting the Right to Know. Keep those cards and letters coming. (With comments, suggestions, and ideas.)

Stay tuned, folks.

Write to: Frances McDonald, Library Media Education Director, Box 20, Mankato State University, Mankato MN 56001.
Get A Clear Answer.
Ask A Professional. Ask Your Librarian.