New Orleans: A Wide Choice of Intellectual Freedom Programs

In addition to IFRT programs and events mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, a number of programs of interest to intellectual freedom advocates will be presented in New Orleans, among them:

"To Be or Not To Be: An Overview of the Political Correctness Debate." Sunday, June 27th, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. IFRT is a co-sponsor of this event.

"Documenting Diversity." Sunday, June 27th, 2-4 p.m. IFRT is a co-sponsor of this event.

"Goldilocks was a Juvenile Delinquent: Censorship of Children’s Literature in American Classrooms." Sunday, June 27th, 4:30-5:30 p.m.

"Israeli Censorship: There and Here." Sunday, June 27th, 8-10 p.m.

"Damned in the U.S.A."—a screening of the film Don Wildmon couldn’t ban! Watch conference program for final date and time.

Celebrate Twenty Years of Grassroots Action on Behalf of Intellectual Freedom in New Orleans

Tom Budlong, IFRT Chair

Twenty years ago a small group of individuals led by John Phillipp Immoth proposed the idea of a round table within the ALA to provide an opportunity for people interested in intellectual freedom to discuss their ideas and take action. Twenty years later this fledgling group has grown into the largest round table in the Association, and one that is still growing at a time when other units of the Association have seen dwindling membership. This growth is testimony to the ongoing and continuous commitment of thousands of librarians to the concepts of free speech and the principles of intellectual freedom upon which our profession is built. I hope that as many of you as possible will join us in New Orleans as we celebrate the Twentieth Anniversary of the founding of the Intellectual Freedom Round Table. This is an opportunity for you to congratulate yourselves, the members of the IFRT, for your continued support of these ideals. For it is the strength and commitment of our members which makes us worthwhile.

The Twentieth Anniversary Conference will offer a variety of activities for members. The largest intellectual freedom event of the conference will be our program, “For Sex, See Librarian”, which will be held on Saturday, June 26th, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. In a town meeting format, the program will address the ways in which libraries and librarians deal with sex and sexuality materials. “For Sex, See Librarian” will be moderated by Dr. L. Lynn Hogue. Panelists will include Robert Rimmer, Vern Bullough, Elizabeth McKenzie, Martha Cornog, Christine Jenkins and Dan Tsang. The IFRT will also honor the 1993 recipients of the Immoth and State Program Awards during this program. We believe that “For Sex, See Librarian” will be one of the major highlights of this year’s conference.

On Monday morning, June 28th, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., the IFRT will hold its annual membership meeting and Soapbox. The Soapbox program is fast becoming one of our most popular offerings: it gives everyone the opportunity to talk about concerns, problems, successes, gripes, etc., with no holds barred.

And last, but certainly not least, we invite you to attend our Twentieth Anniversary Celebration/Get to Know Intellectual Freedom Reception, which begins at 5:30 Monday evening. What better place to hold a celebration than New Orleans? As the folks in the Crescent City say: “Laissez les Bon Temps Rouler!”—“Let the Good Times Roll!”
**IFRT: 1973-1993**

Sue Kamm

With more than 2300 personal members (as of November 1992), the Intellectual Freedom Round Table is the largest Round Table in ALA.

IFRT has sought from its inception in 1973 to provide ALA members with a grass-roots organization dedicated to supporting intellectual freedom. The Round Table’s purposes, as defined in its Bylaws, are:

1. To provide a forum for the discussion of activities, programs, and problems in intellectual freedom of libraries and librarians.
2. To serve as a channel of communication on intellectual freedom matters.
3. To promote a greater opportunity for involvement among the members of ALA in defense of intellectual freedom.
4. To promote a greater feeling of responsibility in the implementation of ALA policies on intellectual freedom.

The Round Table fulfills these purposes in various ways. Since 1985, it has conducted the major intellectual freedom program at the ALA Annual Conference, and holds discussion groups on intellectual freedom issues. It sponsored the Roll Call of the States, an annual forum to foster communication among state intellectual freedom committees and to encourage members and chairs of those committees to become involved with the Round Table’s activities. Beginning with the 1990 Annual Conference, the Round Table instituted the IFRT Soapbox, providing all conference attendees the opportunity to “get up on their soapbox” and address, exhort, challenge, or simply share with their colleagues concerns on intellectual freedom issues. The Soapbox has become a new, established tradition for the IFRT. Finally, the IFRT and the New Members Round Table co-sponsor a “Get to Know Intellectual Freedom” reception at the annual conference, where all ALA members can meet intellectual freedom activists and have the opportunity to become involved with IFRT.

**It All Started With John Phillip Immroth**

At the 1973 Midwinter meeting, John Phillip Immroth proposed the idea of this Round Table to the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee. As he pointed out in his “Report to the Membership” (July 4, 1974), “After thoughtful discussion of the advantages and disadvantages, the IFC unanimously endorsed the idea. My reason in seeking this endorsement was not to tie the round table to the committee, but rather to avoid the possibility of opposition to the round table from an established committee of Council.”

Following the IFC’s endorsement, Immroth and John Forsman obtained 100 signatures on the petition required to establish the Round Table. Working with the Committee on Organization, chaired by Eric Moon, Kathleen Molz, IFC chair and former coordinator of the Social Responsibilities Round Table Task Force on Intellectual Freedom, the organizers secured approval from Council to initiate the Round Table, and held its organizing meeting at the 1973 Annual Conference in Las Vegas. At that time, the new Round Table adopted bylaws, enrolled charter members, and elected its first slate of officers and a nominating committee. Immroth, who had been chair pro tem, was named the first chair. As he reports, “By the close of the 1973 Annual Conference the newest round table had over 100 members.”

During its first year, the Round Table established programs and procedures that have endured through its history. The Executive Committee asked that the Assistant Director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom, then Roger Funk, serve as staff liaison. The Round Table’s newsletter, *IFRT Report*, began publication. IFRT started a tradition of financial support for the Freedom to Read Foundation. Finally, it sponsored exciting and successful programs at the ALA Annual Conference.

**Awards...**

In 1976, in Round Table initiated the John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award, honoring the memory of its founder, who died suddenly earlier that year. The award, consisting of a $500 cash grant and a citation, goes to an individual or group who has demonstrated outstanding courage in defense of intellectual freedom during the preceding year. It is currently funded by Round Table dues; however, in 1989, the Executive Committee launched a campaign to establish an endowment to fund the award so that funds currently employed for it can be used for other IFRT purposes.

The Round Table also grants the IFRT State Program Award, funded by Social Issues Resources Series, Inc. (SIRS). This award, established in 1984, recognizes outstanding programming and other efforts in support of intellectual freedom by state or regional library or media associations’ intellectual freedom committees or state intellectual freedom coalitions. It consists of a $1,000 cash award and a citation.

In memory of Eli M. Oboler, Round Table chair in 1980-1981, former librarian at Idaho State University, staunch supporter of and a prolific author on intellectual freedom issues, IFRT established the Eli M. Oboler Memorial Award in 1986. The award is presented biennially to the finest published work on a topic related to intellectual freedom and library concerns published in the previous two years. It consists of a cash award of $1,500 (donated by HBW Associates) and a citation.

...And more

But the Round Table is not just about awards. Since 1985, IFRT has developed the principal intellectual freedom program at the ALA Annual Conference. Although the program is co-sponsored by the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee and several division IFCs, the Round Table generally suggests the program topic, generates the format, and recommends speakers. The Round Table’s prestigious awards are presented at this meeting as well.

For the first time in IFRT’s history, members voted a dues increase in 1991 so its ever-expanding, lively activities might continue and grow. IFRT is a superb resource for coalition-building nationwide. Round Table members in various states are often called upon to respond quickly to intellectual freedom issues by writing letters to Congress, or to assist a colleague facing a censorship
challenge in their state. IFRT looks forward to continued growth in membership and activities both within ALA and in the broad library community as it celebrates its 20th anniversary in 1993.

Sue Kamm is a former chair of the IFRT. She is currently an IFRT Director, and chair of the Bylaws and Organization Committee.

### Officers of the Intellectual Freedom Round Table

#### July 1974 - June 1975
- Chair: John Phillip Immroth
- Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect: David W. Brunton
- Secretary: Edward L. Whittaker

#### July 1975 - June 1976
- Chair: David W. Brunton
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: John M. Carter
- Secretary: Edward L. Whittaker
- Treasurer: Ella Gaines Yates

#### July 1976 - June 1977
- Chair: John M. Carter
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Karl Weiner
- Secretary: Ione Pierron
- Treasurer: Ella Gaines Yates

#### July 1977 - June 1978
- Chair: Karl Weiner
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Lee B. Brawner
- Secretary: Ione Pierron
- Treasurer: Anna M. Curry

#### July 1978 - June 1979
- Chair: Lee B. Brawner
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Clara O. Jackson
- Secretary: Pamela G. Bonnell
- Treasurer: Anna M. Curry

#### July 1979 - June 1980
- Chair: Clara O. Jackson
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Eli M. Oboler
- Secretary: Pamela G. Bonnell
- Treasurer: Duane H. Meyers

#### July 1980 - June 1981
- Chair: Eli M. Oboler
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Bruce A. Shuman
- Secretary: Laurence A. Miller
- Treasurer: Duane H. Meyers

#### July 1981 - June 1982
- Chair: Bruce A. Shuman
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Susan Kamm
- Secretary: Laurence A. Miller
- Treasurer: Frank VanZanten

#### July 1982 - June 1983
- Chair: Susan Kamm
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: James Nelson
- Secretary: Barbara Jones
- Treasurer: Frank VanZanten

#### July 1983 - June 1984
- Chair: James Nelson
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Pamela G. Bonnell
- Secretary: Barbara Jones
- Treasurer: Amanda R. Bible

#### July 1984 - June 1985
- Chair: Pamela G. Bonnell
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: John Swan
- Secretary: Judith Sessions
- Treasurer: Amanda R. Bible

#### July 1985 - June 1986
- Chair: John Swan
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Barbara Jones
- Secretary: Doug Archer
- Treasurer: William H. Robert

#### July 1986 - June 1987
- Chair: Barbara Jones
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Dorothy M. Broderick
- Secretary: Gene D. Lanier
- Treasurer: William H. Roberts

#### July 1987 - June 1988
- Chair: Dorothy M. Broderick
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Laurence Miller
- Secretary: Gene D. Lanier
- Treasurer: Thomas F. Budlong Jr.

#### July 1988 - June 1989
- Chair: Laurence Miller
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Bill Davis
- Secretary: Martha Merrill
- Treasurer: Tom Budlong, Jr.

#### July 1989 - June 1990
- Chair: Bill Davis
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Christopher Bowen
- Secretary: Martha Merrill
- Treasurer: Pamela R. Klipsch

#### July 1990 - June 1991
- Chair: Christopher Bowen
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Frances M. McDonald
- Secretary: J. Douglas Archer
- Treasurer: Pamela R. Klipsch

#### July 1991 - June 1992
- Chair: Frances M. McDonald
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Tom Budlong
- Secretary: Fay A. Golden
- Treasurer: Lois P. Mills

#### July 1992 - June 1993
- Chair: Tom Budlong
- Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Pamela G. Bonnell
- Secretary: Fay A. Golden
- Treasurer: Lois P. Mills

#### John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award Recipients

1976 F. Stone
1977 Irene Turin
1978 Sonja Coleman
1979 Alex P. Allain
1980 Elizabeth A. Phillips
1981 Not awarded
1982 Steven Pico
1983 Nat Hentoff
1984 Gene D. Lanier
1985 William D. North
1986 Thomas J. Mills
1987 Charles Levendosky
1988 Eleanor and Elliot Goldstein
1989 Cooperative Children's Book Center
1990 Pamela G. Bonnell
1991 Christopher Merrett
1992 Dorothea A. Hunter
State Program Award Recipients

1984 South Carolina Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee
1985 North Carolina Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee
1986 Indiana Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee
1987 Wisconsin Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee
1988 New York Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee
1989 Alabama Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee
1990 None given
1991 Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse
1992 Oklahoma Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee

Eli M. Oboler Memorial Award Recipients

1986 Lawrence W. Levy
Emergence of a Free Press
1988 Temple University Press
Choosing Equality: The Case For Democratic Schooling by Colin Greer, Norman Fruchter, Kenneth Haskins, Marilyn Gittel and Ann Bastian
1990 Missouri Association of School Librarians Spring, 1988 issue of Media Horizons, edited by Aileen Helmick and Floyd Pentlin
1992 Martha Cornog, editor, Libraries, Erotica, and Pornography

Thanks to former IFRT Chair Chris Bowen for compiling the list of officers.

Editorial

Paul Vermouth

When I took over editorship of the *IFRT Report* nearly two years ago, it had already started to move in the direction of printing articles containing general intellectual freedom news in addition to articles about IFRT activities. Over the past three issues, I have tried to continue this trend.

This issue is a reversion to an earlier emphasis on the Intellectual Freedom Round Table itself, as is appropriate on the twentieth anniversary of its founding.

In future numbers of this newsletter, I hope that the publication of substantive articles on IF issues and activities will continue. To do this, the editor needs a strong, committed publications committee; but this alone is not enough: also needed is the active participation of the IFRT membership across the country.

There are at least three ways ordinary IFRT members can participate in production of the *IFRT Report*:

1. Consult with the editor and submit an article.
2. Keep the editor informed about activities and events in your state or region: mail copies of program flyers, write a postcard, send an e-mail message, make a phone call. Leads about interesting events can be followed up by publications committee members.
3. Write a letter to the editor about your intellectual freedom concerns.

This is your newsletter. Your participation will help make it responsive to your needs.
Oboler Award Nominations Sought

Readers of this newsletter are encouraged to submit nominations for the 1994 Eli M. Oboler Award. The Oboler award is given to the author or authors of a publication whose central concern is one or more issues, events, questions, or controversies in the area of intellectual freedom, including matters of ethical, political, or social concern related to intellectual freedom. The work can be an article (including a review article), a series of connected articles, a book, or a manual published on the local, state, or national level, in English or in English translation. In order to be considered for the 1994 award, the work must have been published within the two-year period ending in December 1993.

Nomination documents are due by December 1, 1993; but reasonable accommodation will be made for nomination of materials published near the deadline.

For a complete list of criteria and a nomination form, please contact the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom (800) 545-2433, ex. 4220.

Pick Up Your IFRT Ribbon in New Orleans!

Ribbons for your conference badge identifying you as an IFRT member and noting the IFRT's "20 Years," will be available in limited supply at the OIF table in the conference office area in New Orleans. Pick up your ribbon early and be visible as an IFRT member at conference!

Commentary

Twenty Years of Arguments: A Sign of Health

John Swan

When I was a member of my state ACLU board, our national board representative once reported that at the national gathering it had taken an hour and a half of argument to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Questions of efficiency aside, we all took an ironic pride in the thoroughly anti-monolithic nature of an organization dedicated to individual freedom.

I have the same feeling about the IFRT. Peace and harmony are wonderful things, of course, but not at the expense of free expression and natural human diversity—and one thing we have going for us is real diversity, from rock-ribbed Republicans to knee-jerk liberals (me, for instance).

Having been involved with the IFRT for only thirteen of its twenty years, I can't claim the depth of experience of such battle-hardened champions as Pam Bonnell, Sue Kamm, and Bruce Shuman, but I have felt my share of heat. Indeed, I came into this group on the strength of a heated exchange with none other than Eli Oboler, leader of the fight for intellectual freedom in many ALA venues, prolific author (best known for his classic Fear of the Word: Censorship and Sex), and never a man to shun a good controversy.

I first encountered Eli and what were affectionately known as his oboler dicta in a letter to Library Journal attacking me scathingly and at length for something I had written; naturally, I replied in kind—to give you an idea of the level of discourse, he wrote, "I trust we haven't heard this gentleman's swan song;" I wrote something about being "oboler-whelmed." When I attended my first IFRT meeting, he got his revenge by picking me out of the audience and sticking me on a committee. We continued to fight good-natured battles which taught me much. When he finally lost his brave struggle against cancer in 1983 (it might have been the only argument he ever lost), I had the honor of chairing the committee charged with designing the IFRT award named in his honor. In memory of Eli, then, hail to thee, IFRT, on your twentieth—and keep the heat on: it can be a source of light.

John Swan is a former chair of the IFRT and a former editor of the IFRT Report.