

International Relations Committee Report to Council

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Submitted by Leslie Burger, Chair

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International Participation at Midwinter

Though Annual Conference is a much bigger draw for most, the IRC is pleased to note that 120 librarians from 20 countries attended this Midwinter in Boston. The International Relations Round Table (IRRT) provided a welcome reception for them on Friday afternoon.

IFLA Report

IRC welcomed Donna Scheeder, President, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). Scheeder is the first U.S. President of IFLA since Robert Wedgeworth (1991–1997). Scheeder's term will run through the 2017 IFLA Congress.

IFLA President Scheeder announced that Gerald Leitner will be the new IFLA Secretary General on June 1, 2016. Leitner currently is the Secretary General of the Austrian Library Association. He will replace Jennefer Nicholson, who is retiring in March after eight years at the helm.

IFLA President Scheeder reported on IFLA's participation in the [Summit](#) during which the United Nations announced its new [2030 Agenda](#). The 2030 Agenda includes 17 sustainable development goals to transform the world by 2030. IFLA successfully lobbied to include universal literacy and access to information in the Agenda. Both IFLA President Scheeder and ALA Executive Board Member Loida Garcia-Febo were active participants in IFLA's efforts at the UN over the summer.

To move efforts forward following the Summit, ALA continued its partnership with IFLA by serving as the host for the "Libraries, Advocacy and the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda" on December 15.

IFLA President Scheeder also reported that thirteen countries have ratified the [Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled](#), adopted by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in August 2013. The United States has yet to ratify. Twenty countries are needed to ratify for the treaty to come into force.

IFLA's Governing Board adopted IFLA's new [strategic plan](#) last month. The new plan sets out four strategic directions for 2016–2021. They are: 1) Libraries in Society, 2) Information and Knowledge, 3) Cultural Heritage, and 4) Capacity Building.

Scheeder's presidential theme is "Libraries: A Call to Action," building on the IFLA [Trends Report](#), which identified trends shaping the information society, spanning access to education, privacy, civic engagement, and transformation.

IFLA WLIC 2015—Cape Town

Over 250 U.S. librarians participated in the IFLA World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) in Cape Town. ALA members, including ALA President Sari Feldman, provided presentations, poster session, and workshops while learning from colleagues from around the world. ALA's stand in the exhibit hall was a destination spot. The IRO would like to thank all those members who volunteered their time at the stand. The [American Libraries International Supplement](#) was again a coveted take away.

The [ALA-IRC Africa Subcommittee](#) partnered with the Library and Information Association of South Africa ([LIASA](#)) and the IFLA Section Libraries for Children and Young Adults in a call for books to be donated at the IFLA WLIC. Under the title *Gift a Book and Change a Life*, 450 books were donated to local public library services, schools, and community centers in the Cape Town area. Delegates brought books with them to donate, but also purchased books at local bookstores in Cape Town.

IFLA WLIC Columbus, OH, August 13–19, 2016

Librarians from around the world will descend on Columbus, Ohio, in August as the United States hosts the [IFLA WLIC](#) for the first time since 2001 here in Boston. Hosting the WLIC will provide many librarians in the United States the opportunity to experience an international conference.

ALA and its members are actively involved in supporting and planning the Congress. ALA is a member of the National Committee, co-chaired by Carol Diedrichs, The Ohio State University, and Patrick Losinski, Columbus Metropolitan Library. ALA representatives to IFLA's Section Committee have helped to organize the 30 satellite meetings that will be held in advance of the Congress. The satellite meetings will be held around North America, including Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

For those interested in trying to [present](#) at the Congress, many of the section programs and satellite meetings still have open Calls for Papers. IFLA, following ALA's lead, now has a robust [Poster Session](#) program. U.S. librarians are encouraged to submit proposals to share their success stories with their global colleagues. The [early registration](#) deadline for the Congress is May 17, and ALA members may register at the IFLA member rate by using ALA's IFLA membership code, US-0002.

Fellowships and IMLS Grant

In September, the International Relations Office successfully obtained a 2015 Laura Bush 21st Century Library Program grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The \$50,000 grant (RE-00-15-0108-15) will be used to provide 50, \$1,000 scholarships to help a diverse group of librarians, library staff, and library students in the United States attend the Congress.

The IMLS grant is part of a bigger effort by the National Committee to provide fellowships and scholarships to help librarians, library staff, and librarians from around the world. James Neal, ALA Executive Board member, has led this effort, which to date has raised \$430,000 from 105 library associations, libraries, and library foundations. The success effort will allow the Nation Committee to provide more than the original goal of 50 full fellowships to those outside the U.S. and 100 partial scholarships to those in North America.

SIBF–ALA Library Conference

Three hundred librarians from 19 countries participated in the [2nd annual SIBF/ALA Library Conference](#) on November 10–12 in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (UAE.) The conference is held in conjunction with the Sharjah International Book Fair (SIBF), in partnership with SIBF and Combined Book Exhibits. ALA President Sari Feldman provided the keynote at the Opening General Session, and Jim Neal provided the keynote on the second day of the conference. This year an RDA preconference was added, which proved to be very popular. Before the conference, a contract to assist sales of ALA subscription services in the region, was signed with ALZAD Inc., based in UAE.

United States–Germany Library Partnership Begins

ALA's three-year partnership with the German library community kicks off the [German Library Conference](#), March 14-17, in Leipzig. Under the theme "Library Spaces-Real and Digital," the United States will be the Guest of Honor. ALA President Feldman will participate as a plenary speaker. In addition, twelve other U.S. librarians will provide programs and presentations. The International Relations Office will be organizing a large stand featuring librarians, libraries, and library services in the United States.

ALA-FIL Free Pass Program to Guadalajara Book Fair

In November, the number of ALA member librarians participated in the ALA-FIL Free Pass Program at the Guadalajara Book Fair rebounded after a couple of years of reduced attendance due to the lingering effects of the economy. This year 164 members from 29 states plus the District of Columbia took part.

IRRT

IRRT Chair John Hickok updated the IRC on the activities of the International Relations Round Table (IRRT). The IRRT has signed up for all their members to be able to participate in the International Librarians Network (ILN). It is a facilitated peer-mentoring program designed to help librarians develop international networks. IRRT continues to support an Emerging Leader each year, and this year five Emerging Leaders will participate in the IRRT proposed project to create a global disaster planning resource. IRRT has embarked on new fund-raising efforts to increase its endowment to \$50,000.

ALA Cuba Tour

ALA President Sari Feldman and PLA President Vailey Oehlke will participate in the ALA Tour to Cuba, February 16–23. The tour is scheduled during the week of the Havana Book Fair. Interest to participate in the tour was strong, and it sold out. Thirty others will join Feldman and Oehlke. IRO is coordinating presentation opportunities for Feldman and Oehlke with the Asociación Cubana de Bibliotecarios (ASCUBI) and the Biblioteca Nacional “José Martí.”

ALA participation in the tour was made possible thanks to the offer from the IRC Chair Leslie Burger to oversee the tour after it was initially organized by the Friends of the Princeton Public Library.

Visa Resolution Request

The IRC received a request to bring forward to Council a proposal from the Polish American Library Association to affirm and support the rights of Polish librarians and library workers to travel to the United States without a visa by encouraging Congress to support the [Visa Waiver Program Enhanced Security and Reform Act](#), which has been introduced to Congress a number of times by Mike Quigley (D-III) and Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD). Poland currently is the only European Union country where their citizens still need to apply for a visa to visit the United States. After consultation with the Office for Government Relations and the Chair of the Committee on Legislation, the IRC agreed that the generality of the Act and potential for ALA to be approached by many other countries with a similar request precludes support from ALA.

ALA International Strategic Plan

The IRC continues to work on the new ALA International Strategic Plan, which aligns with that of ALA, including ALA’s three strategic initiatives: advocacy, information policy, and professional & leadership development. After Midwinter, the IRC will connect with other ALA units engaged in international work to develop activities and initiatives.