

International Relations Committee Report to Council

January 28, 2013

Submitted by Nancy Bolt, Chair

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International Librarians at the Midwinter Meeting

IRRT continued its support of international members and attendees at ALA with a reception at the beginning of conference. This year there were 125 international attendees. The IRC was especially pleased that IFLA President Ingrid Parent, Librarian at the University of British Columbia, was able to update the IRC on IFLA activities.

Parent reported on five major initiatives of IFLA: 1) e-lending with a preparation of a report to be widely distributed for comment; 2) a trend report focusing on the political, economic, and cultural environment in which libraries will have to operate in the next five years; 3) copyright issues discussed by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), advocating for access to information, particularly through libraries; co-sponsorship of Beyond Access, projects that highlight the role of libraries around the world bringing about change in local communities; and multi-lingualism in IFLA by translating the IFLA website interface into alternative languages beginning with French and Spanish.

International Relations Strategic Plan

The International Relations Strategic Plan follows the objectives in the ALA2015 Strategic Plan relating these to the international arena. Implementing this plan involves the participation of IRO, IRC, IRRT, and ALA divisions, round tables, and other ALA units as well as the ALA ethnic affiliates. Two activities of note are a survey of international library school programs and educational strategies to promote international awareness in public schools. Both of these are still gathering data for a potential report in the future.

Prepare International Programs for the 2013 Annual Conference

IRC and its regional subcommittees, IRRT, and other ALA units are preparing international programs at the ALA 2013 Annual Conference to be held in Chicago. Both US and international speakers were identified and will be invited to present various sessions on international topics. ALA conference attendees will have opportunities to learn and appreciate the international experience through these programs and events. One of particular interest is a program being developed by the Europe subcommittee in cooperation with the Goethe Institute in New York that features artists from around the world who include graphic depictions of libraries and knowledge in their works. All Counselors are invited to attend the annual International Reception.

ALA at IFLA Conference in Helsinki

A strong contingent of ALA U.S. and non-U.S. members met with other librarians from around the world at the IFLA World Library and Information Congress in Helsinki, Finland, in August. ALA leadership was able to make new connections for possible future collaborations. ALA's booth was once again one of the most popular spots on the exhibit floor.

IFLA Nominations

IFLA nominations are taking place this year for President-elect, Governing Board, and Section Committees. The IRC would like to thank all the ALA units that have worked to solicit and review interested candidates, and for forwarding

such well-qualified members to represent ALA at IFLA. The IRC has reviewed all the nominations and sent its recommendations to the ALA Executive Board.

Guadalajara Book Fair

President Maureen Sullivan led a contingent of over 100 ALA members for the 15th year of the ALA-FIL Free Pass Program to the Guadalajara Book Fair. President Sullivan provided a presentation at the University of Guadalajara's annual Coloquio. ALA's current collaborative agreement with the Fair runs through 2015.

ALA at Library Society of China Conference

The IRC would like to acknowledge Past-President Molly Raphael for her wonderful representation on behalf of ALA at the Library Society of China Conference in Dongguan, China, at the end of November. She was joined by a delegation of ALA members organized by the Chinese American Library Association. The Library Society of China will be bringing a delegation of 40 Chinese librarians interested in children and youth services to the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago who will present a program during the conference.

International Visitors to ALA Headquarters

This fall ALA again has hosted a number of international delegations and groups that were interested in learning about how ALA works and interacts with libraries, the public, and decision makers. OLOS and Diversity Office staff met with librarians from Aarhus, Denmark, to discuss services to multicultural populations. President Maureen Sullivan and Executive Director Keith Michael Fiels discussed the value of libraries in assisting local governments to a delegation of municipal officials from Zhejiang Province, China. And the International Relations Office hosted a three-week visit with a staff member at the Moroccan Ministry of Culture's Department of Books, Libraries, and Archives.

International Library Relief

ALA continues to receive donations from members and others to help rebuild libraries in Haiti, Japan, and Chile. To date supporters have contributed over \$60,000 to help rebuild three adopted libraries in Haiti. A group of teen volunteers, the Friends of the Mill Valley Public Library and Ms. Katie MacBride held a book sale to raise money to rebuild libraries in Haiti. The group's third-year book sale raised \$705.59. The Carleton Washburne School in Winnetka, Illinois, held its 2nd Annual Washburne Read-a-Thon! Students raised \$2,368.28. Thanks to donations, ALA will be able to pay for the shipping of 1,000 Spanish-language books to Chile in February that were gathered and cataloged by the Reforma International Relations Committee.

Campaign for the World's Libraries

Thirty-five library associations around the world have joined the ALA/IFLA Campaign for the World's Libraries based on ALA's @ your library campaign. Countries as diverse as Argentina and Taiwan have been able to use the Campaign to generate public awareness about the value of libraries. This December Slovakia became the Campaign's newest participant. The Guide to the Campaign has been translated into five languages (Spanish, French, Chinese, Polish, and Romanian) and there will soon be a version in Arabic thanks to Khadija Semlali from Morocco, who did an exchange at ALA Headquarters this fall.

Participate in the ALA Advocacy Coordinating Group

The IRC Chair continues to participate in ALA's Coordinating Group's monthly conference calls. Bolt brings international perspectives to the group's advocacy agendas. This concept of cross-association ongoing and frequent communication is a model that IRC hopes to initiate for international activities in ALA. We expect to invite participants and begin these regular conference calls this spring.

International AL Direct

International AL Direct has been published three times since summer 2012. It is now distributed to about 2500 people, including all international members, all IRRT members, other interested parties, and 300 people who have

requested this free online publication. ALA Council members are invited to subscribe. You can read an issue at <http://www.ala.org/offices/international-al-direct>.

US Committee of the Blue Shield

The US Committee of the Blue Shield is a member of the International Committee of the Blue Shield, committed to the preservation of cultural property worldwide. This committee raises public awareness about the importance of cultural property as a shared heritage of all humankind and provides advice and assistance to cultural organizations in emergency planning for situations involving armed conflict. Other participants in this effort include ICOM (the International Council of Museums), ICOMOS (the International Council of Monuments and Sites), ICA (the International Council on Archives) and IFLA (the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) CCAAA (Coordinating Council of Audiovisual Archives Associations).

Most recently, the US Committee of the Blue Shield assisted Japan in recovering cultural property damaged in the Tsunami. Nancy Quinn has represented ALA on the US Committee of the Blue Shield for four years and will be leaving this committee this year. IRC would like to commend her for her service and will issue a call for nominations for a new appointment this spring.

Destruction of Libraries and Manuscripts in Timbuktu, Mali

While at this conference, ALA members learned of the destruction of libraries and manuscripts in Timbuktu, Mali. All that seems to be known at this time is that the destruction occurred during an attempt by the French and Malian army to recapture Timbuktu as part of the ongoing turmoil in this country and that Islamist rebels destroyed an unknown number of manuscripts. Estimates of the number of destroyed manuscripts at the Ahmed Baba Institute and one other site range from 3,000 to 20,000, as reported in the media. Also reported was that an unknown number of manuscripts had been previously removed to a remote site for safe-keeping. Some of the manuscripts in the libraries date back to the 13th century.

IRC and the US Committee of the Blue Shield are monitoring the situation and will report to Council as soon as more definitive information is known. At that point, some action on the part of ALA may be recommended.

Resolution on Supporting the WIPO Treaty for Improved Access for People Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, and with Other Print Disabilities (CD#18.1)

During the 2000 decade, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) engaged in a number of studies mapping copyright exceptions among member nations. This was unusual because copyright exceptions often are seen as weakening copyright law. One of first studies dealt with copyright exceptions for people with disabilities. The report indicated that only a third of the member nations had a disability exception. The United States does have an exception, known as the “Chafee amendment” §121 of Title 17.

Since 2009, WIPO has made it a priority to formulate a treaty compelling all nations to have a disability exception. In addition, the idea of cross-border sharing of accessible content is a focus so countries can share accessible content with other nations for the use by their disabled populations.

The Library Copy Right Alliance (LCA) has been advocating for this treaty since 2009. Since the Obama Administration, LCA has had a very good relationship with the U.S. delegation to WIPO in negotiating aspects of the treaty. The U.S. delegation members are representatives from the Copyright Office, the Patent and Trade Office, the State Department, and the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

The WIPO Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR), after years of challenging negotiations, announced in December 2012 that a diplomatic conference—the highest level of negotiation—will be held in June 2013. In preparation for this conference, WIPO SCCR will hold a special session in February 2013 to finalize the treaty language.

While great progress has been made in the advancement of the treaty, there continues to be opposition from publishing and licensing groups around the world but particularly in the EU and the U.S. This opposition is strong and still could prevent the treaty from moving forward. Publishers are lobbying both the U.S. delegation and Congress to end treaty negotiations. In general, if the United States does not support the treaty, it is effectively dead. Thus it is important to keep the U.S. delegation engaged with libraries and disability associations.

The LCA has worked with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the World Blind Union, the National Federation of the Blind and the American Council for the Blind to keep up the pressure. Now that we have a draft treaty that is in the last steps of finalization and endorsement, grassroots advocacy efforts to members of the U.S. Senate (who approve international treaties for implementation in United States law) are in order. The attached resolution, if passed by Council, will strengthen the efforts of LCA to influence the language and the passage of the treaty.

Resolution on United States Funding and Participation in UNESCO (CD#18.2)

The US National Commission for UNESCO has 54 organizational members, ranging from the American Architectural Foundation to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, and seven representatives from Federal agencies. ALA is a member organization, represented by ALA Past President Barbara Ford.

Until recently, the US has been a full dues-paying member of UNESCO. UNESCO offers and supports many important programs of value to libraries in the U.S. UNESCO's commitment to inclusive knowledge societies support people having the capabilities not just to acquire information but also to transform it into knowledge and understanding, which empowers them to enhance their livelihoods and contribute to the social and economic development of their societies. One focus is the education and training of women throughout the world. Other topics that UNESCO works on include freedom of expression, information literacy, digital heritage and digital libraries, free and open software, open access to scientific resources, and open educational resources.

Congress stopped funding UNESCO in late 2011 after UNESCO admitted Palestine into full membership in UNESCO, pursuant to US laws from the 1990s that require the United States to cut off funds to any UN agency that recognizes Palestine as a full member. The US has a grace period of two years before they are no longer allowed to vote on the creation, operation, and support of UNESCO programs. A major US role in UNESCO has been to advocate for values of access to information and empowerment of citizens, particularly in repressive countries.

There is a process called a "national interest waiver" that would allow Congress to pay UNESCO dues, notwithstanding the laws that currently prevent this payment. If Congress passes this "national interest waiver," it will allow the US to keep its vote in UNESCO and advocate for shared values globally through full participation in UNESCO projects.

The attached resolution, if passed by Council, will show the strong support of ALA for full participation of the US in UNESCO.

Staff Acknowledgement

The Chair and the Committee would like to thank the staff of the International Relations Office for all its support.

Resolution on Supporting the WIPO Treaty for Improved Access for People Who are Blind, Visually Impaired and with Other Print Disabilities

Whereas ALA Policy 54.3.2 (Library Services for People with Disabilities) states that “library materials must be accessible to all patrons including people with disabilities”;

Whereas ALA Policy 50.15.1 (*Principles for the Networked World*) states that equitable access is a critical public policy of American Library Association;

Whereas ALA Council adopted the Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP) Digitization Workgroup's values, through "Resolution on Principles for Digital Content," stating that "equitable access to digital library materials is ensured through maximum accessibility, ubiquity, sustainability, and barrier-free access" (ALA Council Document 20.9, 2007);

Whereas ALA Policy 58.1 (International Relations, Policy Objectives) states that a major international relations policy objective must “encourage the exchange, dissemination, and access to information and the unrestricted flow of library materials in all formats throughout the world”;

Whereas ALA Policy 58.4. (Article 19 of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights) states that the principles of non-discrimination, equal opportunity, accessibility, and full and effective participation and inclusion in society are proclaimed in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR);

Whereas persons with visual impairments/print disabilities need access to published works in order to achieve equal opportunities in society;

Whereas the majority of persons with visual impairments/print disabilities live in developing and least-developed countries;

Whereas the World Blind Union (WBU) has determined that only 7 percent of published books in accessible formats like Braille, audio and large print are available in the richest countries, and less than 1 percent in poorer ones, calling the situation a “book famine”;

Whereas two-thirds of World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) member nations have no copyright exception allowing for the production of accessible copies for people with print disabilities in their national laws, and cross-border sharing of accessible content should be facilitated under international law;

Whereas despite the differences in national copyright laws, the positive impact of new information and communication technologies on the lives of persons with visual impairments/print disabilities may be reinforced by an enhanced legal framework at the international level;

Whereas libraries serve as authorized entities and make accessible copies for library users with print disabilities;

Resolution on Supporting the WIPO Treaty for Improved Access for People Who are Blind, Visually Impaired and with Other Print Disabilities/2

Whereas the WIPO International Instrument/Treaty on Limitations and Exceptions for Visually

Impaired Persons/Persons with Print Disabilities would allow authorized entities to make accessible copies of books in all signatory countries;

Whereas the treaty would make it legal to send accessible books across national borders, making more books available for the print-disabled;

Whereas cross-border sharing of accessible content could enable U.S. libraries to better serve their users by providing a broader array of accessible format copies of materials, particularly those in a variety of languages; and

Whereas WIPO nations expect to hold a diplomatic conference to finalize the treaty text; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA):

1. endorses the Obama Administration’s statement that access to information is a universal right;
2. commends the United States delegation to World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) for their recognition of libraries as critical providers of accessible content; and
3. supports the call for a diplomatic conference to enact the WIPO International Instrument/Treaty on Limitations and Exceptions for Visually Impaired Persons/Persons with Print Disabilities.

Endorsed by

International Relations Committee (IRC)

Committee on Legislation (COL)

Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA)

Office for Information Technology (OITP) Advisory Committee

Resolution on United States Funding and Participation in UNESCO

Whereas ALA Policy 51 (Federal Legislative Policy) specifically recognizes the need for the United States to be a member the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the development of libraries in the United States and around the world;

Whereas the American Library Association objected to the United States withdrawal from UNESCO in 1984 (CD 17.1, 1984), and commended President George W. Bush for returning the United States to full membership in UNESCO in 2002 (Press Release, October 2002);

Whereas UNESCO focuses on the advancement of values that are in alignment with those of the American Library Association (ALA);

Whereas these values include promotion and advancement of education around the world, freedom of expression, including a free and open Internet and media sector, the sharing of scientific knowledge, and cultural understanding through the preservation of world heritage and intercultural dialogue;

Whereas UNESCO works on issues relating to freedom of expression, information literacy, digital heritage and digital libraries, free and open software, open access to scientific resources, and open educational resources;

Whereas the United States has played a leading role in the creation and development of UNESCO, from the drafting of its constitution to the creation of some of its most successful programs;

Whereas Congress stopped funding UNESCO in late 2011 after the agency admitted Palestine into its membership, pursuant to US law that requires the United States to cut off funds to any United Nations agency that recognizes Palestine as a full member;

Whereas the State Department has made a request to Congress for a national interest waiver that will allow the United States to keep its vote in UNESCO and advocate for shared values globally through full participation in UNESCO projects;

Whereas the cessation of United States funding has created a significant deficit in UNESCO's budget, resulting in either canceling or jeopardizing countless programs that improve people's lives; and

Whereas the United States will lose its vote at the next General Conference of UNESCO in fall 2013 if dues are not paid; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA):

1. urges Congress to approve the national interest waiver so the United States can again pay its dues, and become a fully functioning member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Endorsed by

International Relations Committee (IRC)