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International advocacy for information ethics: the role of IFLA

Abstract:

This paper focuses on IFLA's international advocacy role. It explores the relationship between library advocacy and information ethics, before outlining the ethical thrusts of IFLA's advocacy and describing IFLA's international advocacy work, with special emphasis on Africa.

Agenda

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Introduction

When we look back on the last decades of the twentieth century one of the features that strikes us is the number of world summits held in an attempt to deal with deep-seated human problems at an international level. Well-known examples are the Earth Summit (United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the Fourth World Conference on Women (World Women Summit, Beijing, 19950, the Millennium Assembly (New York, 2000), and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002).

This trend was accompanied by a significant increase in the international advocacy role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), or more generally, of "Civil Society". Initially at least, NGOs were not particularly welcome at the conference table, which was seen as the preserve of government delegations. But while these delegations continued with their complex, formalised, and often cynical diplomatic rituals, civil society was busy at the fringes, observing, learning, adopting the Internet to communicate and organise its supporters, and "working the system" to insert its concerns into the discussions and influence the outcomes. This was very evident at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), held in Geneva and Tunis in 2003 and 2005 respectively. WSIS may not have yielded much of concrete significance, but arguably it represented a breakthrough for Civil Society, which there achieved a degree of recognition and influence not seen before.[1]

One of the organisations active at the two WSIS summits was IFLA, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. This paper focuses on IFLA's international advocacy role. It explores the relationship between library advocacy and information ethics, before outlining the ethical thrusts of IFLA's advocacy and describing IFLA's international advocacy work, with special emphasis on Africa.

In the following Venn diagram, the focus of this paper is depicted by the intersection of the three circles:

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[1] This view is contested. See for example Gurstein (2005) and Currie (2005).

Fig. 1: International library advocacy in relation to information ethics

Library advocacy

Library advocacy can have both political and ethical motivations. In the political sphere library advocacy is primarily concerned with resource allocation. The emphasis is on putting the library on the political agenda of the governmental or institutional decision-makers to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to enable the library to serve its clientele. This can involve such issues as the distribution and location of library service points, their accessibility and service hours, and the matching of facilities, collections, staff and services to the anticipated needs of clients, including clients from disadvantaged and marginalised groups. A typical example is the Campaign for America's Libraries, a five-year project of the American Library Association launched in 2001. It had five goals:

1. Increase awareness and support for libraries
2. Increase library usage
3. Promote recruitment to the profession
4. Bring libraries to the table on public-policy issues
5. Impact funding for libraries (Advocacy... 2004)

In the context of this campaign advocacy was defined as follows: "Advocacy is turning passive support into educated action by stakeholders." (P. G. Schuman, cited in Advocacy... 2004:32)

In the context of the Information or Knowledge Society the survival and continued centrality of the library and its place in relation to other, competing or complementary agencies are prominent concerns. Such concerns can be linked to self-preservation or

survival needs of institutions and professional groups as much as to ethical motivations.

Ethical basis of library advocacy

More distinctly ethical motivations for library advocacy can be related to three key ethical principles that are referred to in this paper as (1) Freedom, (2) Equity and (3) Inclusion. All three of these are related to the essential mediating role of the librarian. As stated in the first three of Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science, librarians bring together information ("books") and users ("readers"):

1. Books are for use.
2. Every person his or her book.
3. Every book its reader.
4. Save the time of the reader.
5. The library is a growing organism
   (Ranganathan 1931)

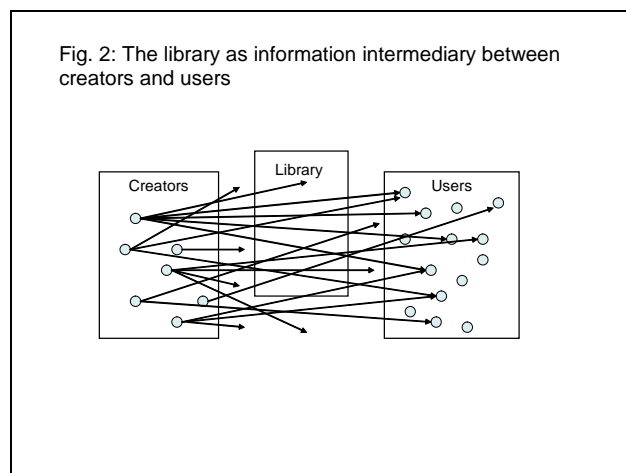The role of the library as an information intermediary is depicted in Figure 2.

Fig. 2: The library as information intermediary between creators and users

Figures 2 depicts two major kinds of failure that can occur: (a) information that is disseminated fails to reach users; and (b) users fail to receive information that is disseminated. In addition, delays and obstacles occur as a result of (c) a failure of effectiveness or efficiency on the part of the Library, as implied in Ranganathan's fourth Law.

In this paper failure of type (c) is not considered. Therefore, various aspects of library deontology are not discussed here, for example professional relations between colleagues, the custodial

responsibilities of the librarian, and the tension between preservation and use.

The other two forms of failure can be caused by various societal filters or barriers that form obstacles to the creation, transmission and reception of information:

- Barriers of a political and cultural nature often take the form of censorship and pose threats to freedom of expression and freedom of access to information.

- Barriers of a legal and economic nature often take the form of intellectual property restrictions that pose threats to equitable access to information by users in less affluent communities and countries.

- Barriers of a socio-economic nature often take the form of social disadvantages in terms of educational, occupational and economic opportunities, and pose threats to social inclusion.

The mediating task of the librarian implies that the librarian is concerned with three ethical issues in respect of societal barriers: those of freedom, equity and inclusion respectively.

Freedom is concerned with freedom of access to information and freedom of expression. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights provides a widely accepted basis for this principle:

> *Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*

It is comprehensive, because it deals with the rights of both creators and users of information. Creators need to be free to think independently, to create, and to disseminate their works whether they convey factual or fictional information ("information and ideas"). Users need to be free to seek and receive information. No distinctions may be made between categories of creators and users, e.g. in terms of gender, ethnic background, politics or religion (cf. Art. 2). Various forms of censorship deny these freedoms and form political obstacles to creation, transmission and reception. In the library context, there is particular emphasis on collections and services, as stated, for example in the IFLA/UNESCO manifesto on public libraries:

Collections and services should not be subject to any form of ideological, political or religious censorship, nor commercial pressures (IFLA 1994).

Equity refers to equitable or fair legal and economic relationships between the various role-players in the dissemination and delivery of information: creators (such as authors and artists), intermediaries (including publishers, booksellers, content aggregators and librarians), and consumers (users, readers, audiences, etc.), who themselves may also be creators. These parties depend on one another. All have rights (cf. Art. 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), but they have various degrees of power to exercise their rights. In an ideal world the rights and powers of the parties will be in balance. Imbalances in respect of power give rise to economic obstacles to creation, transmission and reception. In the conflicts that arise here the limitations of an approach based only on human rights become evident, and concepts of social justice, as developed for example by Britz (2004; in press) are needed to establish an ethical basis for discussion.

Social justice also forms the basis for the principle of *Inclusion*. It is mainly (but not exclusively) concerned with the users of information. There are economic and social factors that hold down or marginalise individuals and groups in society, depriving them of the benefits of information that is disseminated. It is not only that they lack access to information for enhancing their quality of life. More fundamentally they may lack the awareness that information can make a difference and they may lack the skills that are needed to seek and utilise it. Repression, discrimination and marginalisation create social obstacles to creation, transmission and reception. This situation is unacceptable in terms of human rights and social justice.

IFLA and international advocacy

IFLA, founded in 1927, is an international non-governmental organisation with members in some 150 countries. Its core values emphasise a number of essentially ethical principles:

1. the endorsement of the principles of freedom of access to information, ideas and works of imagination and freedom of expression embodied in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

2. the belief that people, communities and organizations need universal and equitable access to information, ideas and works of imagination for their social, educational, cultural, democratic and economic well-being

3. the conviction that delivery of high quality library and information services helps guarantee that access

4. the commitment to enable all Members of the Federation to engage in, and benefit from, its activities without regard to citizenship, disability, ethnic origin, gender, geographical location, language, political philosophy, race or religion (IFLA 2005b).

IFLA consequently has a long history of advocacy in the field of library and information services. A strong focus has long been on promoting the development of librarianship and library services worldwide, through interlinked activities relating to:

- international library cooperation, for example, through the former core programmes of Universal Availability of Publications (UAP) and Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC)

- the development and dissemination of best professional practice, for example through the Preservation and Conservation (PAC) core activity

- stimulating and assisting library development in developing countries, through the Action for development through Libraries Programme (ALP)

The late 1990s saw the emergence of new IFLA core activities: the Committee on Copyright and Other legal Matters (CLM) and the Committee on Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE). Both of these have a stronger advocacy focus, on the themes of Equity and Freedom issues respectively. The third advocacy theme, Inclusion, came to prominence as part of IFLA's advocacy activities during the WSIS process (2003-2005). An overview is now given of these three areas of advocacy activity.

Freedom of Information: FAIFE

FAIFE (Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression) is the IFLA Core Activity promoting the freedoms that its name implies insofar that they impinge, directly or indirectly, on libraries and

librarianship. The FAIFE initiative was started at the IFLA Conference in Istanbul in 1995 with the Council of IFLA's confirmation of the commitment to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the creation of the Committee on Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (CAIFE) to investigate the role of IFLA in addressing the constraints on the right to information. In 1997, IFLA formalised the work of CAIFE by establishing FAIFE (Committee on Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression) as a core activity within the organisation. According to the 1997 resolution FAIFE's task is to:

> advise IFLA on matters of international significance to libraries and librarianship in this area, including, but not limited to: censorship of library materials; ideological, economic, political or religious pressures resulting in limitations on access to information in libraries; restrictions on librarians and other information specialists who provide reference and other information services (cited in Sørenson 1998).

The establishment of the FAIFE Office in Copenhagen followed in 1998. In its first years FAIFE was financially supported by the City of Copenhagen, the Nordic library community, and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). For the period 2005-2009 FAIFE has received substantial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida and will focus its work on the relationship between freedom of information and the struggle against corruption, poverty, and disease.

FAIFE operates independently and does not support any specific political, economic or other special interests except the promotion and defence of intellectual freedom through unrestricted access to information regardless of media.

FAIFE attempts continuously to monitor the state of intellectual freedom within the library community world-wide. In doing so it depends on networking and partnerships. The FAIFE Committee of some 27 members nominated by the library association and institutional IFLA members in their countries, is a basic component of the network.

In addition, FAIFE is a member of various international intellectual freedom bodies such as the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX). Freedom of information, like all freedom, is indivisible. Restrictions and abuses affecting journalists, authors and publishers, even if they do not involve libraries, restrict the range of information that librarians can offer their users. Although IFLA's limited resources impose limitations on the scope and emphasis of FAIFE, freedom of the media is critical, and cooperation between libraries and the media are important in the fight against censorship. Thus FAIFE participates in the Tunisia Monitoring Group (TMG), a coalition of 15 IFEX member organisations. The TMG monitors free expression violations in Tunisia to focus attention on the country's need to improve its human rights record as the host of the November 2005 World Summit on the Information Society (IFEX 2006). In response to violations of freedom of expression, and only once these have been confirmed from independent sources, IFLA may issue press statements, which can be found on its web pages at http://www.ifla.org/faife/faife/faife.htm.

Research and publications form an important part of FAIFE's advocacy work. Since 2001 FAIFE has annually published a report based on international data collection that provides an overview of how libraries around the world are tackling barriers to freedom of access to information and freedom of expression. This provides invaluable baseline data against which progress or lack thereof in the intellectual freedom situation of libraries in many countries can be measured. The World Report Series comprises two sub-series: the *IFLA/FAIFE World Report,* based on questionnaire returns from over one hundred countries, is published every second year while the *IFLA/FAIFE Theme Report*, based on invited contributions from experts, is published in alternate years. Six reports have appeared to date.[2]

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[2] The following titles have been published:

2001: *The IFLA/FAIFE World Report on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom*

2002: *The IFLA/FAIFE Summary Report: Libraries, Conflicts and the Internet*

2003: *Intellectual freedom in the information society, libraries and the Internet (IFLA/FAIFE Workd Report)*

2004: *Libraries for Lifelong Literacy: Unrestricted access to information as a basis for lifelong learning and empowerment (IFLA/FAIFE Theme Report)*

2005: *Libraries, National Security, Freedom of Information Laws and Social Responsibilities (IFLA/FAIFE World Report)*

The most recent report, the 2006 IFLA/FAIFE Theme report, *Libraries and the fight against HIV/AIDS, poverty and corruption*, contains contributions on the role of libraries in serving marginalised communities in Africa (Ocholla 2006) and in combating HIV/AIDS (Albright 2006). A contract for compiling the 2007 World Report has been awarded to the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

FAIFE supports IFLA policy development by conducting research and drafting policy statements and guidelines on various aspects of intellectual freedom in libraries. A good example is the *Internet manifesto*. This manifesto was prepared by FAIFE and adopted unanimously on 23 August 2002 at the 68th IFLA General Conference and Council, held in Glasgow, Scotland. The manifesto consists of four sections dealing with IFLA's position on access to information, the relationship between libraries and the Internet, principles of freedom of access to information via the Internet, and the implementation of the Manifesto.

Following the adoption of the *Internet manifesto*, it has thus far been translated into 19 languages. IFLA has encouraged national library associations to adopt it in their countries. The *IFLA/FAIFE world report*, referred to earlier, annually reports on this. As of now, national library associations in about 30 countries have formally adopted the manifesto, with many more planning to do so.

FAIFE's work on this topic did not end with the adoption of the *Internet manifesto*. A notable example of FAIFE's research work is Stuart Hamilton's PhD project in the Department of Library and Information Management at the Royal School of Library and Information Science, Copenhagen, Denmark. His thesis, entitled *To what extent can libraries ensure free, equal and unhampered access to Internet-accessible resources from a global perspective?* was completed and accepted in 2005 (Hamilton 2005).

Following on from its work on the *Internet manifesto*, FAIFE was awarded a grant by UNESCO's Information For All Programme (IFAP) to develop the *IFLA/UNESCO Internet Manifesto Guidelines* (IFLA 2006b), designed to help librarians all over the world to implement the Internet Manifesto in

practice, taking into account in particular the needs of developing countries. Development of the guidelines was a participative and interactive process involving workshops in various parts of the world, and will be followed by a series of practical seminars to be held in the developing regions of Africa, Asia and Oceania, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

This illustrates the educational role played by FAIFE through seminars, workshops and professional programmes at IFLA's annual congresses. An example of the latter was the "FAIFE debate" held at the 2006 IFLA World Library and Information Congress in Seoul, South Korea, on the controversy over the publication in the Danish newspaper *Jyllandsposten* of cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed. The cartoons offended many Muslims, raised important question about limits to freedom of expression and exposed the limitations of blind adherence to one particular article of a human rights statement (Sturges 2006).

FAIFE seminars and workshops on intellectual freedom issues are held in the developing regions of the world, including Africa. The most recent was a FAIFE workshop on Intellectual Freedom and the Information and Knowledge Society held at SCECSAL[3] XVII in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in July 2006 (IFLA 2006a). Mention should also be made here of the GIOPS-FAIFE[4] African Seminar and post-WSIS Conference, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in March 2006, which dealt with the role of libraries in strengthening democratic progress and economic development through free access to information, especially government information (Kirkwood 2006b, 2006c). For the August 2007 IFLA Congress in South Africa, a FAIFE satellite meeting is being planned on the role of libraries in fighting corruption, censorship and poverty.

Information equity: CLM

The Committee on Copyright and other Legal Matters (CLM) is the IFLA Core Activity promoting fairness in intellectual property rights and measures

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2006: *Libraries and the fight against HIV/AIDS, poverty and corruption (IFLA/FAIFE Theme Report)*

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[3] SCECSAL is the acronym for: Standing Conference of Eastern, Central and Southern African Library and Information Professionals.

[4] GIOPS is the acronym for: IFLA's Government Information and Official Publications Section.

affecting access to information through libraries. It was set up in 1997 to advise IFLA on:

> *Copyright and Intellectual Property, Economic and trade barriers to the acquisition of library material, Disputed claims of ownership of library materials, authenticity of electronic texts, Subscription and licence agreements, Other legal matters of international significance to libraries and librarianship (IFLA 1997).*

Since then its scope has extended to such issues as access to digital resources, digital rights management and anti-circumvention technology, public lending right, protection of indigenous knowledge, and treaties on cultural diversity and access to knowledge (Scott 2003; Tabb 2005).

What do all of these topics have in common? All have to do with legal and economic barriers to free and equitable access to information. In principle, information should flow from creators to users through intermediaries, to the benefit of all parties. Content creators (e.g. authors) should receive recognition and appropriate recompense. This can be a direct monetary reward, as in the case of authors of novels, children's books or textbooks, composers or performers. But the reward may also take the form of prestige and career advancement, as in the case of authors of articles published in scientific and scholarly journals. Users (e.g. readers) should benefit from access to information and works of the imagination which contribute to education, economic development, and both material and spiritual quality of life. Intermediaries (unless in the public sector) should derive a return on their investment in packaging and disseminating content. In the Gutenberg era a system of intellectual property evolved that sought to balance the interests of authors and their readers. But in the Information Society information has become a commodity. Modern information and communications technologies, globalisation, and the commodification of information have upset the balance, giving excessive power to intermediaries such as publishers who, rather than authors, tend to be the rights holders (Britz & Lor 2003; Lor & Britz 2005).

Inappropriate use of the power held by information intermediaries can present serious obstacles to the transmission of content to users, particularly users in developing countries. For example:

- Steeply rising, unaffordable prices (cf. Association of Research Libraries 2004; Dewatripont et al. 2006)
- Unfair licensing schemes
- Double dipping (in the case of scholarly publishing the client or the client's institution is made to pay twice, first for content creation, then for access to it)
- Excessive profits
- Predatory intellectual property tactics, including unreasonable extensions of the term of copyright, extension of copyright to content that is in the public domain, and anti-circumvention technology that, while protecting copyright, also locks up content that should be freely accessible.

Libraries and users in developing countries are most severely affected by these conditions (Britz, Lor & Bothma 2006), but even the wealthiest research libraries in the developed countries are affected. As the international body representing libraries and their users, IFLA regards this issue as one of major concern, and has formulated as one of its priorities: "balancing the intellectual property rights of authors with the needs of users" (IFLA 2001a).

In pursuit of this priority, CLM engages in a range of advocacy activities including research and policy development leading to the release of IFLA statements on important issues, awareness raising, networking and coalition building, and representation and intervention at meetings of international bodies. Like the FAIFE Committee, the Committee consists of members nominated by the library association and institutional IFLA members in their countries, who represent their own country or wider region, together with a small number of expert resource persons. Unlike FAIFE, CLM does not have a dedicated office or staff. In spite of this, CLM has an impressive record of achievement.

An important CLM activity has been raising awareness in the library community and providing guidance to the profession on issues that have implications for library collections and services, for example, in respect of electronic or digital resources. The growing importance of digital resources has proved to be a mixed blessing for libraries and their users. On the one hand, the digital environment opens up new possibilities to provide faster and more convenient access to resources. This enables librarians not only to enhance their services, but also to reach out to new or underserved library users, for example users in

developing countries with very limited library resources. On the other hand, the digital environment offers the holders of content rights new means of controlling access to content and whittling away the amount of content which, in conventional printed formats, would have been freely accessible under fair use exemptions. Claiming that "digital is different", content owners have argued that such exemptions and limitations to copyright are not appropriate to digital content. However, IFLA's position, stated in its position statement *IFLA Position on Copyright in the Digital Environment*, developed by CLM, is that "digital is *not* different" (IFLA 2000).

The CLM followed up the position paper by preparing guidelines for the use of librarians having to negotiate licensed access to electronic resources. The *Licensing Principles* cover such aspects as sound legal practice, fairness in contracts, conditions of access and use, the position of end users, long-term access and archiving, pricing, provisions for interlibrary loan and document delivery, and access for distance education students (IFLA 2001b).

In 2004 IFLA issued a significant and comprehensive statement on *Limitations and exceptions to copyright and neighbouring rights in the digital environment: an international library perspective* (IFLA 2004). The document makes a case for preserving the balance originally established in copyright laws between creators and users of content.

> The original purpose of copyright was to protect the author or creator in the wider public interest. We now live in a digital age and there is a danger of copyright becoming a legal protection mechanism for commercial conglomerates. There is a growing threat to the public interest aspect of copyright, with certain copyright owners wielding an enormous power to set their own rules and build a "private legislation" that does not necessarily take into account the balance created in copyright laws....
>
> Although no one denies rights owners the right to obtain a return on their investment, limitations in the form of exceptions must be part of the equation to ensure that society may also obtain a similar return on its investment in education and research. Only in this way will a balance be achieved (IFLA 2004).

On behalf of IFLA and the international library community CLM has taken this battle to the international intellectual property arena, lobbying for example at the World Intellectual property Organization (WIPO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). In doing so CLM has also been concerned to raise general awareness of the issues, which may seem remote to librarians at the local level. An example is the publication *Tips for TRIPS* (IFLA 2002), intended to help the library community to understand what is at stake in the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). TRIPS brings intellectual property under the WTO's international trade regime and sets common standards for intellectual property for all WTO members. This has negative consequences for developing countries, which are coerced into enacting restrictive copyright legislation that is arguably inappropriate to countries at that development stage, and certainly were not applicable to countries such as the United States when they were at a comparable developmental stage (cf. Khan 2007). It is well known that in the 19th century the works of the British author Charles Dickens were pirated on a large scale in the United States (Ward 2002; Wikipedia 2007).

CLM's international advocacy work covers a wide range of issues. It has been active at WIPO in the debates on the Access to Knowledge ("A2K") Treaty, and works with the World Blind Union on access to library materials for print-disabled readers. CLM was also active in recent meetings at UNESCO including meetings during 2001-2005 at which the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions (popularly known as the Convention on Cultural Diversity) was hammered out. At the WTO, CLM has taken a keen interest in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) which, in opening up national markets for service industries and public services to international competition, may have unintended negative consequences for free public libraries.

In its advocacy work CLM does not work in isolation, but rather in close partnership with other organisations such as the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) and Electronic Information for Libraries (eIFL). CLM also works closely with national associations and coalitions, e.g. the Library Copyright Alliance[5] in the USA. CLM is represented

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[5] The Library Copyright Alliance is an alliance of the American Association of Law Libraries, the American Library Association, the Association of

in the IFLA/IPA Steering Group, a joint forum of IFLA and the International Publishers Association (IPA), where both matters of common concern and issues on which librarians and publishers disagree, are discussed (Tabb 2005).

The issues with which CLM is concerned are highly relevant to developing countries. In this context it is worth noting that an Africa Copyright and Access to Information Alliance was launched in November 2005 at the Africa Copyright Forum Conference, co-sponsored by IFLA, which was held in Kampala, Uganda. This is a potentially important development in the struggle for equitable access to information in Africa, where governments are being pressurised into adopting extremely restrictive copyright legislation in order to qualify for so-called free trade agreements with developed countries (Nicholson 2006). Such restrictive legislation tends to eliminate fair use exemptions for libraries and academic use in spite of their being widely available to users in developed countries. It is also worth noting that in Africa there is an externally driven movement to set up reproduction rights organisations to collect royalties for rights holders when copies are made. Whilst authors and other creators are fully entitled to their royalties, in some African countries this is like setting up toll plazas before the toll roads have been constructed.

Inclusion: Information Society advocacy

IFLA's advocacy on the ethical theme of Inclusion is an activity that crystallised around IFLA's participation in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). Here there is some overlap between the political and the ethical concerns outlined in the introduction to this paper, since in IFLA's advocacy work Inclusion has a twofold meaning, referring to the library as an agency of social inclusion and to the inclusion of the library as a key agency in the Information/Knowledge Society.

A World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was first proposed by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), in 1998 and the proposal was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2001. Unusually, WSIS took place in two phases. The first phase was

held in Geneva on 10-12 December 2003 and the second phase in Tunis on 16-18 November 2005 (Berry 2006), preceded by further PrepCom and related meetings. In the course of this long process, the focus shifted from the somewhat technological emphasis of the ITU to a more balanced approach encompassing social, cultural, economic and political factors. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) came to play a more prominent role in the summits, along with a large number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), referred to broadly as "Civil Society". One could say that there was a shift from the "digital divide", with its technological emphasis, to the "Information Society", a more multidimensional concept.

During the Geneva phase the broad themes concerning the Information Society were discussed and two documents, a *Declaration of Principles* and a *Plan of Action* were prepared and adopted (WSIS 2003). This gave rise to questions as to what remained to be done in Tunis, where the focus was to be on implementation. The main outstanding issues that had not been resolved in Geneva concerned:

- Internet governance
- How to finance the bridging of the digital divide, and
- Modalities of follow-up (whether a new UN structure should be set up to monitor and evaluate progress following the Tunis summit)

At Tunis all three of these issues were hotly debated. Internet governance proved a sticking point until almost the last minute, when a compromise was reached according to which the Secretary General of the UN would set up a multi-stakeholder Internet Governance Forum with some moral authority but little else. The Governments of most developed countries proved unwilling to make a firm financial commitment to bridging the digital divide. Neither were they keen to see yet another agency added to the UN family to oversee the implementation of the WSIS action plans. Hence WSIS follow-up responsibilities are being distributed among a number of international agencies, with the ITU and UNESCO playing lead roles in respect of

Research Libraries, the Medical Library Association, and the Special Libraries Association.

many of the action lines that had been defined in the Geneva action plan.[6]

Among Civil Society groups there was some anxiety that some of the commitments of principle made in Geneva might be watered down under pressure from certain governments. In particular, given the very poor human rights situation in the host country, Tunisia, it was anticipated that attempts might be made to water down the firm commitment to freedom of information that had been made in the Geneva document. In the event, a number of governments attempted to do this in Tunis, but they were unsuccessful.

Thanks to intensive and sustained advocacy work by IFLA and its allies (Byrne et al. 2004; Haavisto & Lor 2005; Kirkwood 2006a, Mahnke 2006), the principles and action plan document adopted in Geneva contained some very favourable language concerning the role of libraries in the Information Society. In the library community there were fears that some of these gains might be eroded during the second phase of the Summit. During the period between the two phases, IFLA continued to stress the value of libraries as agencies promoting national progress in the information society. IFLA's argument was that it is not necessary to invent new agencies to provide the peoples of the world with access to networked knowledge resources. Such agencies already exist – they are called libraries. In some countries libraries are already doing a great job in providing their people with access to networked information. In other countries only a modest additional investment would be needed to enable them to do this effectively. In November 2005, just before the Tunis summit IFLA, together with the Biblioteca Alexandrina, organised a pre-summit Conference in Alexandria, Egypt, on the theme "Libraries: the information society in action", in which success stories illustrating the role of libraries in the Information Society were showcased. At the end of the pre-summit IFLA launched its *Alexandria Manifesto on Libraries, the Information Society in Action* (IFLA 2005a).

In the event, the Tunis summit also provided IFLA with an excellent platform to promote the role of libraries in the Information Society. IFLA's efforts

did not go unrewarded and the gains that had been achieved during the Geneva 2003 phase were successfully carried forward to the final document. In par. 90(k) of the *Tunis Agenda for the Information Society* (WSIS 2005), the key concluding document of the Tunis Summit, the role of libraries in providing equitable access to information and knowledge for all, is emphasised. The document reaffirms a commitment to "providing equitable access to information and knowledge for all" and to use ICTs as development tools by:

> *k.* supporting educational, scientific, and cultural institutions*, including libraries, archives and museums, in their role of developing, providing equitable, open and affordable access to, and preserving diverse and varied content, including in digital form, to support informal and formal education, research and innovation; and in particular supporting libraries in their public service role of providing free and equitable access to information and of improving ICT literacy and community connectivity, particularly in underserved communities;*

From IFLA's perspective there are currently two main lines of follow-up of the WSIS summits. One concerns the Internet governance issue and the setting up of the Internet Governance Forum. The other concerns the eleven "action lines" described in the Geneva *Plan of action* (WSIS 2003). For each action line a UN organisation (e.g. ITU or UNESCO) has been appointed rather quaintly as "facilitator" or "moderator", with an individual being designated as the "focal point". Various "facilitation" and consultation meetings are taking place to set the follow-up activities in motion. IFLA has allocated priorities to each of the action lines, and is concentrating on the action lines of highest priority, namely:

Highest priority:
    C3 Access to information and knowledge

High priority:
    C1 Promotion of ICTs for development
    C4 Capacity building
    C8 Cultural diversity & identity, linguistic diversity and local content
    C10 Ethical dimensions of the Information Society

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[6] Since the Tunis Summit the United Nations-wide follow-up of the WSIS summits is the responsibility of the Commission on Science and technology for Development (CSTD) of the UN Economic and social Council (ECOSOC).

Medium priority

C7 ICT applications (some of these are allocated a high priority)[7]

IFLA has set up a working group, designated as the President-elect's Information Society Working Group, to keep abreast of progress in respect of the action lines and other important issues (such as Internet governance) arising from WSIS, but not limited to it. An important objective of IFLA's post-WSIS advocacy has been the empowerment of the library profession at the national level to advocate for the inclusion of libraries in national information society strategies, information policies, and budgets. This is pursued by means of workshops and presentations at conferences such as the WSIS Follow-up Conference on Access to Information and Knowledge for Development, held in Addis Ababa in March 2006, where a workshop was held on building African capacity to implement the outcomes of WSIS in respect of libraries and access to knowledge. An analysis of the WSIS action lines and how they can be used in advocacy for libraries, is available on IFLA's website (IFLA 2006c).

Conclusion

Although they have here been discussed separately, the three advocacy themes are clearly interlinked. Freedom of information without equitable access regimes is a hollow promise. An equitable intellectual property regime is of little use to communities and groups that are excluded from the Information Society. Hence advocacy work should not be conducted within silos.

Responding to the clearly expressed need of its constituency for it to take the lead in international advocacy for libraries and access to information, IFLA is consolidating its advocacy efforts by setting up a small, professionally staffed advocacy unit at its headquarters in The Hague. The unit will focus on the three themes outlined here, but the themes will not be separated into three silos. Instead, it will seek to achieve synergy. Advocacy staff, supported by other Headquarters staff will be involved in the generic advocacy processes of research and monitoring, horizon scanning, policy development,

networking, representation, education and awareness-raising.

Of course, one or two professionals cannot possibly cover all bases and be present in every forum where issues affecting libraries and access to information are decided. FAIFE, CLM and the WSIS team have achieved significant impact through the efforts of volunteers. IFLA will continue to rely heavily on the expertise and dedication of its members. In the advocacy unit the emphasis will be on mobilising the skills and expertise of the worldwide profession, on networking, facilitating and coordinating. Such an approach is appropriate to a profession that values freedom, equity and inclusion, and has a long tradition of expressing this through cooperation and sharing.

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[7] The short titles of the action lines can sometimes be misleading. The selected priorities make more sense when the full text of each action line is studied.

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