

## **Ethics and advocacy: IFLA/FAIFE in the context of IFLA's international advocacy**

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### **Introduction**

I have been asked to speak about IFLA's Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) core activity. In this paper I would like to place FAIFE in the broader context of IFLA's international advocacy work, and since the theme of this conference is Information and Ethics, I shall start by attempting to place IFLA's advocacy work in an ethical framework.

### **Ethical basis of library advocacy**

Library advocacy can have both political and ethical rationales. 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. The resource allocation falls outside the scope of this paper, although it has to be remembered that the political and ethical aspects are often interwoven. 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 always, when discussing fundamental concepts of our profession, it is useful to consider S R Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science:

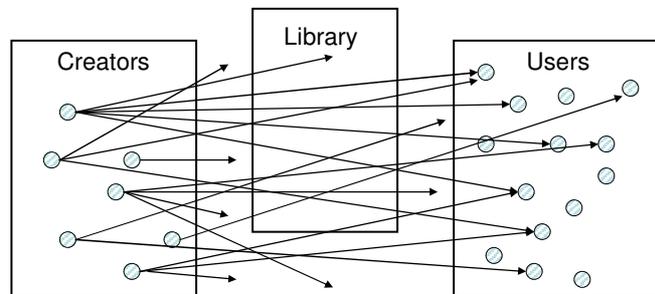
1. Books are for use.
2. Every person his or her book.
3. Every book its reader.
4. Save the time of the reader.
5. The library is a growing organism (Ranganathan 1931)

As implied by the first three laws, librarians bring together information ("books") and users ("readers"). Accordingly, the role of the library as an information intermediary can be depicted as follows (Figure 1):

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is an adapted and revised version of a paper prepared for the African Information Ethics Symposium, Pretoria, South Africa, 5-7 February 2007, under the title "International advocacy for information ethics: the role of IFLA".

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



In this process various kinds of failure can occur, two of which are especially relevant here: (a) information that is disseminated fails to reach users; and (b) users fail to receive information that is disseminated. There can also occur (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 only failure of types (a) and (b) is dealt with. They 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 in, 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 by Britz (2004; in press) and others 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 the principles of freedom of information as embodied in Article 19, universal and equitable access to

information, and the role of high quality library and information services to help guarantee that access:

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 2005).

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 Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) (Campbell 2002). 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). In this paper I confine myself to FAIFE.

It is worth noting here that in recent years IFLA has conceptualised its vast range of activities according to the "Three Pillars" model, put forward by Kay Raseroka, then IFLA President, and Alex Byrne, then President-elect, at the end of 2004 (Raseroka & Byrne, 2004):

- The Members Pillar is concerned with services to IFLA's members. These include member benefits and services, such as free publications and significant discounts on other IFLA publications and conference attendance, and participation in IFLA's governance.
- The Profession Pillar is concerned with the issues covered by IFLA's professional sections and divisions, to which professional librarians and information workers world-wide voluntarily contribute their time and expertise in determining professional innovation and best practice.

- The Society Pillar is concerned with IFLA's contribution to Society as a whole. It has to do with the role and impact of libraries and information services in society and the contextual factors that determine their operational environment. In particular it is concerned with advocacy.

The Three Pillars model is useful in structuring IFLA's activities, especially its strategic plan. It is also an important statement in that it gives recognition to advocacy as a key area of activity for IFLA.

### **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 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 Sørensen 1998).

The establishment of the FAIFE Office in Copenhagen followed in 1998, with support from the Danish Ministry of Culture, The Danish Agency for Deelopment Assistance (DANIDA), and the City of Copenhagen. A number library associations and institutions in the Nordic countries, Netherlands and Germany have also provided financial support for FAIFE.

FAIFE's main objective is to ensure that library users around the world may "seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers". IFLA/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). For example 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 an 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:

- 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 World 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)*
- 2006: *Libraries and the fight against HIV/AIDS, poverty and corruption (IFLA/FAIFE Theme 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
- 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 annual *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*. During 2003 to 2006, Stuart Hamilton, initially a doctoral student in the Department of Library and Information Management at the Royal School of Library and Information Science, Copenhagen, Denmark, worked on a number of research projects at the FAIFE Office in Copenhagen. These included his PhD project. 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 by through seminars, workshops and professional programmes at IFLA's annual congresses. Another 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 a Danish newspaper, *Jyllandsposten*, of cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed. The cartoons offended many Muslims and 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<sup>2</sup> XVII in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in July 2006 (IFLA 2006a). Mention should also be made here of the GIOPS-FAIFE<sup>3</sup> 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).

### **Current FAIFE activities (2007)**

For the period 2005-2009 FAIFE has received substantial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida. This has enabled FAIFE to broaden the scope of its projects to such themes as the role of libraries in helping to

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<sup>2</sup> SCECSAL is the acronym for Standing Conference of Eastern, Central and Southern African Library and Information Professionals.

<sup>3</sup> GIOPS is the acronym for IFLA's Government Information and Official Publications Section.

fight corruption, censorship and poverty, and assessing information barriers, the impact of technology and cultural diversity in developing countries. In addition to the compilation and distribution of the 2007 FAIFE World Report (already referred to above) a large number of Sida-supported projects are under way or being planned for 2007. Here are some examples:

- Translations will be made into Spanish, Portuguese and French of a full set of IFLA/UNESCO manifestos and guidelines in a single brochure. The translations will also be made available on the IFLA website. Two workshops will be held in Latin America on the implementation of these manifestos and guidelines.
- A FAIFE programme on equal access to information about HIV/AIDS, entitled *Access to HIV/AIDS information in Africa and intellectual property issues* is planned for the 2007 IFLA World Library and Information Congress in Durban.
- An IFLA policy statement on the fight against HIV/AIDS is to be issued at the Durban Congress.
- A HIV/AIDS learning package is to be developed at a consultation meeting of library and education professionals in Dubai in the summer of 2007.
- 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. This is to be held in Johannesburg.
- A mission of two FAIFE representatives is to visit Israel and the Palestinian Territories in April 2007 to assess the impact of conflict on freedom of access to information in libraries.
- As an outcome of the debate on the Danish cartoons that was held during the Seoul Congress, a two-day conference on tolerance is being planned to take place in a Cairo or Damascus during the autumn of 2007.
- A workshop on the role of libraries and community media in respecting cultural and linguistic diversity is to be held in Botswana in the autumn of 2007. This workshop is to lead to an IFLA Policy statement and learning package on this subject.

### **The future of FAIFE**

In this paper the focus has been on FAIFE and the advocacy theme of Freedom. But the three advocacy themes of Freedom, Equity and Inclusion 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.

As part of this process, the FAIFE Office in Copenhagen was closed in December 2006. This step follows a decision by the IFLA Governing Board in 2004 to move FAIFE to The Hague. As from 2007, FAIFE activities are supported and coordinated by IFLA's headquarters in The Hague. Currently IFLA's advocacy work is in a transitional stage. Although discussions with potential funders are ongoing, funding has not yet been secured for full-time advocacy staff at IFLA headquarters. In the short term this implies that the work of the FAIFE Office will have to be shared between IFLA headquarters staff, the FAIFE Committee and Advisory Board, and other partners. The outsourcing of the 2007 World Report is in line with this approach. We anticipate that a much greater part of FAIFE's activities will be outsourced in future, and that this will continue to be the case even after the planned advocacy unit is in place at IFLA headquarters. The focus will shift from doing projects in-house to having them done by consultants and partners, and whenever possible we will seek these in developing countries. Of course, when projects are outsourced, they still have to be managed. Fortunately, IFLA headquarters has considerable expertise in project and financial management.

As mentioned earlier, Sida has provided significant funding for FAIFE until the end of 2009. However, other sources of funding have diminished, leaving only Sida and the IFLA Core Activities Fund, which is depends on an annual fund-raising drive among the IFLA membership. Thus, the long-term funding of FAIFE remains a big challenge.

The changes that are taking place will also require some rethinking of FAIFE's governance, and the respective roles of the Governing Board, the FAIFE Committee and Advisory Board and their chair; the Secretary General and the advocacy staff at headquarters, and a network of FAIFE supporters, volunteers and partners. Decisions on this can be expected following the Governing Board meeting in April 2007.

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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