



IFLA members pay tribute to out-going president, Robert Wedgeworth at the 63rd IFLA council and general conference in Copenhagen

IFLA past and future



Robert Wedgeworth

IFLA past-president

As many of you know, the day after my election as IFLA president in Moscow, August 1991, there was an attempted coup d'état which held the people of Russia and the IFLA conference in suspense for almost three days. The ensuing social and political upheavals in central and eastern Europe had a devastating effect on the organized library community.

When the IFLA Executive Board met in December 1991 we faced the prospect of a decline in membership that would add to the already significant financial problems. But, our collective experience of working with library associations in Australia, Finland, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America helped the Board fashion an effective program to revitalise IFLA.

Today IFLA has a robust and growing membership, a healthy financial profile, a strong presence on the Internet uniting the global library community, and a record of well-attended conferences for the past five years. IFLA's new leadership faces a different set of challenges.

Developing policies that address problems of censorship and other access barriers to information will not be an easy task for

the new Committee on Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (CAIFE) that will be based in Copenhagen. Giving vigorous representation before world bodies deliberating on questions of copyright and other legal matters that affect libraries will also present new challenges to the new Committee on Copyright and Other Legal Matters.

Of course the continuing disparities between libraries in the developed and developing world and the need to harmonise education for library and information service careers will remain high on the IFLA agenda. Based on my experience working with the new IFLA president, Christine Deschamps and the former treasurer, Warren Horton, I am confident that the new IFLA leadership will rise to meet these challenges. The collective experiences of librarians from many countries gives IFLA a wealth of talent upon which to build for the future.

International associations will grow in importance because so many of the issues we face in our separate countries have international implications. Whether it is standards for the Internet, or combating duties and taxes on educational materials, we all have a stake in the development of global strategies. ■