

IFLA 2004: a delegate's view

70th IFLA Conference,
22–27 August 2004, Buenos Aires, Argentina

The World Library and Information Congress, IFLA Conference and Council is the biggest annual event organised by IFLA, bringing together librarians, information specialists and other information professionals. This year, the conference was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina — the first time it has been held in South America.

The theme of the conference was 'Libraries as tools to education and development'. Mrs A Perucena, president of the IFLA National Organising Committee, said that the theme reflected the most-urgent issues of the profession in Latin America: that is, the integration of libraries into education, and regional development as a means to fight the poverty and marginalisation of their people.

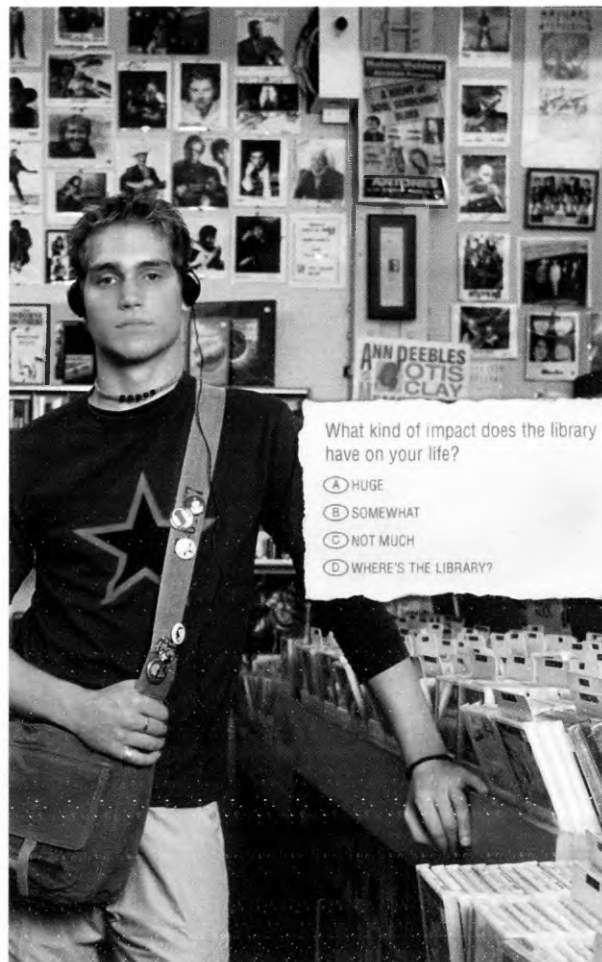
The conference was officially opened by the Argentinian Minister of Education, who emphasised the importance of libraries in societies, and stressed the need for all partners in the library and information sectors to join efforts to play their role effectively in education and development, and to facilitate equal access to information.

One of the striking features of the 70th Conference was the diversity of attendees and speakers, including professionals from more than 120 countries working in all different types of libraries, with more than 200 papers presented during the six days. Some of the main issues covered include information literacy; libraries and their roles in education and development; ICT and libraries; skills and competencies needed by librarians to fit in this challenging world; libraries as an engine to provide the latest on-line government information; equality of access to information; and evaluation and quality of library services.

The conference also included workshops (such as the new professionals discussion groups and libraries facing ICT challenges), visits to Argentinean libraries, and poster sessions displaying a wide variety of services provided by libraries, institutions, organisations and training centres through the world. An exhibition was held at which some 100 exhibitors (including great publishers like Thomson, Oxford and Cambridge University Press, Blackwells, and professional institutions such as CILIP (UK) and the National Libraries of France, Singapore, Korea) were present to market their latest information products, services and library software.

The conference provided the participants with an excellent opportunity to interact, share experiences and strategies with library professionals and specialists from other regions facing similar challenges; to establish contact with library professionals; for libraries to develop networks and co-operation; to enhance our knowledge of the new and modern roles of the profession and libraries in respect of ICT; to seek strategies and solutions to develop libraries as centres of life-long education and self development; to establish contact with suppliers to provide users access to more resources and databases; and to be aware of the latest information products and library software available.

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