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IFLA Conference Barcelona

Report by *Margaret Shaw* and *Maxine Rochester*

The 59th IFLA Conference was held at the Palau de Congressos de Barcelona from 22-28 August, 1993. Spain previously hosted the second IFLA Conference in 1935 which opened in Madrid and moved through Salamanca and Seville to close in Barcelona.

Although only about 25 of the almost three thousand delegates at IFLA '93 were Australians, this group managed to have an impact disproportionate to its size. A significant number of Australian delegates gave papers or held positions in the organisation.

Warren Horton, Director-General of the National Library of Australia and a member of the Executive Board of IFLA, was elected Treasurer of the organisation. Maxine Rochester of the School of Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, was elected Chair of the Division of Education and Research thus becoming a member of the Professional Board which coordinates and directs the professional work of IFLA. Maxine has previously served as Secretary/Financial Officer of the Division, as well as holding other IFLA positions. Margaret Shaw, Chief Librarian of the National Gallery of Australia, completed her term of eight years on the Art Section Standing Committee, four as Chair, and was elected as the Section's first Honorary Adviser. Robert Pestell of the State Library of Queensland, was elected to a second two-year term as Chair of the Round Table on Mobile Libraries, of which he was previously Secretary, and Susanne Bruhn of the National Library of Australia became Secretary of the Section on Libraries Serving Disadvantaged Persons.

Other new members of the Executive Board elected were Ekaterina U Genieva from Russia and Sun Beixin from China.

Barcelona, a beautiful European city and capital of Catalunya, charmed delegates with its rich endowment of art collections and architectural attractions. Sadly, we had to learn to be wary of the muggers, pick-pockets and purse snatchers to whom around 50 delegates fell victim during the course of the Conference.

We were impressed by the strength of the resurgence of the Catalan language and culture, outlawed under Franco, but now proudly evident and in official use with many conference speakers presenting their papers in Catalan and wide use

of the language throughout the city. There are now an estimated 10 million Catalan speakers in North-Eastern Spain and Southern France.

While there were a number of wonderful social events, most notably a reception put on by the Conference Organisers in association with the Diputació de Barcelona and the Barcelona City Council at the Poble Espanyol where good food and wine, music, dancing and fireworks added to the atmos-



Pat Layzell-Ward, Alex Byrne and Maxine Rochester enjoy the reception at the Poble Espanyol

phere, even this did not start until 9 pm, as we worked through a schedule which seemed to take in both Spanish and Northern European working hours — without the famed siesta. This made for an exhausting but very productive week.

The theme for the Conference was *The universal library: libraries as centres for the global availability of information*. This was particularly appropriate at a time when shrinking resources and growing needs for information are a world-wide phenomenon.

However, despite economic constraints in many parts of the world, IFLA activities continue to get support from many quarters and the Core Programs are actively represented in research, writing and publishing. Practical help was also evident in conference sessions dealing with aid programs and cultural repatriation. In one of these, organised by the National State Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow, the contribution made by Australia's book-aid program was specifically recognised. Australians were also warmly welcomed by Chinese delegates, reflecting the growing links between Australian and Chinese libraries. They are hoping for a strong Australian representation at IFLA in Beijing in 1996.

Core Program activities reported in-



Maxine Rochester and Margaret Shaw with members of the Chinese delegation

cluded UAP (Universal Availability of Publications and Interlending) workshops for Arab speaking librarians (UNESCO supported) and for colleagues from Eastern Europe. PAC (Preservation and Conservation), ALP (Advancements of Librarianship in the Third World) together with the International Council on Archives also reported a workshop held in Africa with representatives from 24 countries and financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation and the World Bank.

The Conference program included a wide range of general and sectional sessions and workshops, together with the usual plethora of satellite conferences. While back-to-back meetings may be exhausting, they do help to maximise the benefit gained from travelling over-seas to a conference venue.

The official IFLA Pre-Conference, sponsored each year by UNESCO for librarians from developing countries, was on School Libraries; the first one held on this topic. Fay Nicholson gave a paper and some of the participants will also be attending the International Association of School Librarians Conference to be held in Adelaide in September.

Other pre-conferences included Australian participants including those reported below.

The 2nd IFLA Satellite Meeting on Automated Systems for Access to Multilingual and Multiscript Materials was attended by Robert Prestell, Linda Groom, Susan MacDougall and Eugenie Greig. This seminar provided an update on the developments in multiscript access since the last satellite meeting. Of particular interest was the progress on Unicode, the standardization of character sets, which has the potential to revolutionise access to data worldwide. Automated multiscript systems were demonstrated, and significant progress has been made in this area. The Biblioteca Nacional of Spain hosted the semi-

nar and their hospitality was tremendous.

The Art Libraries Section, with around 200 delegates at the Pre-Conference organised by the Grup de Bibliotecaris d'Art de Catalunya at the Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya with support from the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, continues to be one of the most active in IFLA. Twenty-four papers in two days covered a range of topics particularly new technologies, with emphasis on imaging, and the documentation of Spanish art and architecture. Sue Boaden and Margaret Shaw represented Australia and Sue was on a panel discussing education for art librarianship during the main IFLA Conference.

The Second World Conference on Continuing Education, was organised by the Continuing Professional Education Round Table (CPERT) of IFLA with local assistance from the Escola Universitària de Biblioteconomia i Documentació 'Jordi Rubió i Balaguer' which was founded in 1915. Four Australians presented papers: Margaret Trask, Fay Nicholson, Pat Layzell Ward and Maxine Rochester. Anne Clyde, an Australian expatriate currently based in Iceland, also gave a paper. The strength of Australia's contribution reflects Australia's leadership in this field.

Australians who offered papers during the course of the IFLA Conference were Wendy Smith (NLA), Derek Whitehead (SLV), Carol Mills (currently USP, in absentia) and Susanne Bruhn (NLA).

Clearly, going by the level of involvement, Australia has much to offer to the international library community. Equally, those who are involved in IFLA can attest to the value of the information available and contacts made through attendance. For those interested in attending future conferences, they will be: 1994 — Havana, Cuba; 1995 — Istanbul, Turkey; 1996 — Beijing, China. ■



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