

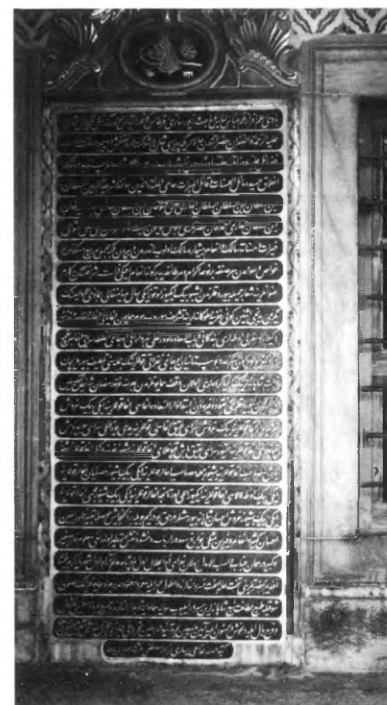
# IFLA 95

The venue for the 1995 conference of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) was Istanbul, Turkey. A bustling city of 12 million people sprawled across the continents of Asia and Europe, Istanbul is an amalgam of the very old and the very new from every perspective. The Swissotel, the location of most conference sessions, represented the latest in five-star luxury with expansive views from its site on the European shore of the Bosphorus across the waters to Asia. The journey from the Swissotel to the famous palace of the sultans — Topkapi — for a reception on the first night combined the pleasures and perils of the roads of Bangkok, the history of Rome and the romance of Paris. We dined on the shores of the Bosphorus and later adjourned to the Aya Ireni — Church of Saint Irene — built in the sixth century, for a recital by some members of the Istanbul Symphony Orchestra.

Istanbul has something for every-

one. There's the spectacularly ornate Harem in the Topkapi Palace — home for up to 3 000 concubines of the Sultan; the Pera Palas Hotel where Agatha Christie resided while writing *Murder on the Orient Express*; the Covered Bazaar with its myriad alleyways and vendors of gold, leather, carpets and so much more; mosques on every block with their amplified muezzin calling the Turks to prayer and there's the museum of the Whirling Dervishes. There is little doubt that the allure of Istanbul generated the biggest ever turnout for an IFLA conference but the 2 600 delegates had to squeeze their tourist activities into a busy conference program which is the real purpose of this report.

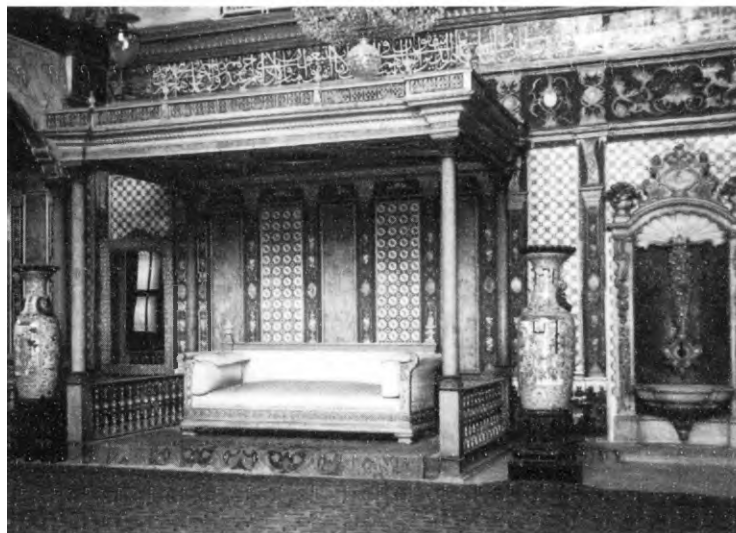
The first major task of the conference was to attend the meeting of the IFLA Council where elections would be held to fill vacancies on the Executive Board. Warren Horton, Director General of the National Library of Australia, has held a position on the Board since 1991 and was a candidate for re-election at this meeting. Warren, unfortunately, was unable to attend the Istanbul conference because he was receiving medical treatment and was advised by his doctors not to travel. This, I soon discovered, was not just a great disappointment for Warren, but was the subject of much regret by other members of the Executive Board and the many supporters Warren has gained during his participation in the management of IFLA. It is testimony to this widespread regard for War-



*Above: The Harem at Topkapi Palace built in the 16th century during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent*

ren that, in his absence, he was elected for a further term on the Board. We now look forward to Warren's continued participation in IFLA and we are delighted that Australia can maintain its high international profile in this forum.

The conference sessions were extensive, varied in content and variable in quality. Presentations covered the gamut of library sectors and professional interests. From ALIA's perspective, there was a session on the management of library associations. Subjects ranged from identifying and meeting member needs to the value of building a World Wide Web site. This session could have benefited from the provision of time for discussion between the participants and the presenters and I understand that this will be considered in the scheduling of this session at future conferences. The session



*Above: Reception room at Topkapi Palace*

## IFLA Study tour 1996

ALIA is organising a study tour to Beijing for next year's conference. In addition to the IFLA program we are developing a program of tours and events with the assistance of AIMA Training and Consultancy Services which will be professionally rewarding for all who participate. At this stage we anticipate visiting Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing. The total cost for the 14-day study tour which runs from 17–31 August 1996 (IFLA 25–31 August) including airfares, accommodation, most meals, tours and IFLA conference registration will be about \$5 000.

For further information regarding the study tour please contact Sue Ridout at ALIA National Office on (06) 285 1877, e-mail [sue.ridout@alia.org.au](mailto:sue.ridout@alia.org.au) or complete this form and return it to Sue at National Office, PO Box E441, Queen Victoria Terrace ACT 2600.

**Yes I am interested in attending the Beijing study tour in August 1996. Please send me more details when they are available.**

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on libraries and marketing was so popular that the room overflowed. Unfortunately no provision was made for translators and since two of the papers were delivered in French, many participants remained ignorant of their content. In this session there was general support for the adoption of marketing



*Above: View along the Bosphorus*

principles in programs to promote libraries. However one member of the audience gave an emotional recitation deploring the use of the 'marketing mix', especially the concept of 'price', in public libraries. Because services are free, the argument went, price is not relevant. Needless to say, this interjection generated some interesting exchanges between the participants. Other sessions covered specialist professional activities and the various library sectors. As expected, there was the pervasive theme of adapting to the changes wrought by evolving information technologies.

One of the outstanding highlights of the conference was the library tours. When you read the history of Turkey

you are continually confronted with the existence of libraries — in the harems, palaces, mosques, dervish lodges, tombs and the like. I selected a tour that incorporated visits to three libraries. The Süleymaniye Kutuphaanesi (the library at the mosque of Süleyman the Magnificent) contains the most comprehensive collection of Islamic manuscripts in the world. The library was established in 1751 in the Mosque complex which was built in 1557. Today it houses the collections of many former institutions because of the need for more sophisticated preservation conditions for the invaluable collections. On display in the library's exhibition hall are some breath-taking illuminated manuscripts. The preservation standards may not yet be world-class (we all thought as we took our flash photographs) but certainly the Turkish Government is developing a responsible policy of conservation of this rich heritage.

The two other libraries that I visited were the Beyazit State Library and the Istanbul University Library. The State Library was architecturally alluring with great domed ceilings over the main reading room. The library has a collection of about 600 000 manuscripts and books but clearly suffers from a limited budget which, we were told, has had an impact on its collection strategies and which, we could see, has



*The spice market*

clearly impacted on its building maintenance program. The Istanbul University Library is making use of new technologies with CD-ROM searching facilities and is in the process of going on-line. The main library is housed in a new building of six storeys completed in 1981. The old building is the home of the rare materials department and houses an extensive collection of Ottoman manuscripts.

Without a doubt the IFLA program in Istanbul provided something for everyone. In recognition of this, ALIA is organising a study tour to Beijing for the 1996 IFLA conference (see previous page for further details) — shouldn't you attend?

**Virginia Walsh**



*Süleymaniye Camii (built between 1550 and 1557 by Sinan, Turkey's greatest architect), Mosque of Süleyman the Magnificent dominates the Golden Horn*

## Who What Where & When?

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