

Access point library: media – information – culture

The World Library and Information Congress 2003, Ibrahim Ramjaun, librarian (Mauritius)

Attending the World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) is a dream for many library and information professionals simply because it is the biggest annual international conference of librarians organised by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. Founded in 1927, IFLA is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit organisation that works closely with UNESCO to promote international understanding, co-operation, discussions, research and development in all areas of library and information science.

This year's congress was held during August at the International Congress Centre in Berlin, Germany. The theme was *Access point library: media — information — culture* which sums up the tasks of libraries: in addition to preserving the treasures of science and culture accumulated in the past, libraries must be forward-looking and adopt the latest information technology to provide their customers with the right information at the right time and in the most efficient way.

The 69th IFLA's Annual General Conference and Council provided an excellent opportunity for more than 4500 participants from around the world to debate professional issues, share knowledge and see the latest products of the information industry.

Delegates were gratified with high-level presentations made during the plenary sessions by intellectuals such as Adama Samassekou, president of the Preparatory Committee of the World Summit on the Information Society who is also the president of the African Academy of Languages and former minister of education of the Republic of Mali. The title

of his paper was: 'The world summit: A first step towards a society of commonly shared expertise and knowledge.' For his part, Professor Dr Klaus Ring, managing director of the Reading Foundation expanded on the topic: 'Are the internet and printed products interchangeable media?' whereas Abdelaziz Abid of UNESCO talked on 'UNESCO, library development and the World Summit on the Information Society'. Jeanette Hofmann made an exposé on 'Democracy and globalisation'.

A panoply of subject-areas were explored during the various sessions, workshops and industry updates. Subjects ranged from marketing library and information services, bibliography, audiovisual and multimedia, quality issues, collection development, continuing professional development and learning, and the management of library associations; to newspapers and copyright developments, document delivery and inter-lending, free access to information and freedom of expression, library buildings and equipment, LIS journals, serial publications and reference work.

The poster sessions alone saw the participation of seventy-six participants, and 150 organisations — including the American Library Association, Blackwell, Bowker, Dynix Corporation, EBSCO, Dawson, Elsevier, Emerald, Geac, Oxford University Press, ProQuest, Springer-Verlag, and Saur — took part in the four-day exhibition. This provided delegates with information about state-of-the-art products and services related to the library and information field.

The World Library and Information Congress was a golden opportunity not only for professional enrichment but also

for forging links with library and information colleagues from all continents. Being multilingual was indeed a great advantage during such encounters. I was thus delighted to meet Gayner Eyre and John Kennedy, my former lecturers from Charles Sturt University, and Selenay Aytac a fellow from Isik University, Istanbul, Turkey.

The half-day Berlin orientation tour and the library visit were memorable events especially for first-timers. One could get a glimpse of the beautiful scenery of Berlin, its magnificent buildings, the famous Berlin wall, the efficient public transport system. Visitors were amazed to see Germans riding bicycles in the busy city centre and to note the number of trees that have been systematically planted on both sides of the streets.

This year's congress saw the successful completion of Christine Deschamps' term of office as IFLA's president and the beginning of Kay Raseroka's mandate as the president-elect. Christine will be remembered as a dynamic and able lady who contributed immensely to raise the profile of IFLA and to introduce innovative reforms.

IFLA, the German national organising committee, the sponsors and two hundred volunteers deserve our heartiest congratulations for making such an important international congress a great success. Last, but not least, our gratitude goes to Bibliothek and Information International (BII) for having generously allocated grants to enable twenty-five participants from developing countries to attend the WLIC 2003. ■

Celebrating success

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) Information Services team recently received the inaugural OCTC (Office of the Chief Tax Counsel) Line Award for Excellence in Client Service. Each team member was presented with a personalised certificate at the awards ceremonies at various sites around Australia. This Award was in recognition of the high-quality service provided by the Information Services team to support the research and information needs of ATO staff, while implementing major changes in service delivery.

The team of approximately seventy staff has improved library facilities, information resources, research assistance and skilling programs across the Australian Taxation Office. Information Services staff have also developed e-learning and workshop skilling materials to enhance the information skills of ATO staff. The library services team have been breaking new ground while at the same time improving quality and responsiveness.

Executive director of information services, Charu Sood, said that she was particularly pleased by this recognition of staff efforts, given that the last year had been a difficult and challenging period due to staff shortages and cutbacks.

Sinead Williams, assistant director research and client liaison, Information Services, Australian Taxation Office