IFLA - Information Technology Section

Report 2010/2011

Within the section Information Technology, in the last years work has been concentrated on the identification and intermediation of innovative developments and emerging trends with high potential for the future of libraries and other cultural heritage organizations. For these topics, the section has developed core areas which help – facing the variety of touch points of information technology with topics coming of the surrounding of librarianship – to focus the activities of the section and to form a clear profile. This does not exclude the gathering of new and i.e. current topics asked after by other sections, but prevents from wrong expectations within as well as outside the section.

The yearly updated document "Strategic Plan" [1] Informs generally about the strategy of the section. Due to the re-organization of the "in-between level" in IFLA above the sections (the former divisions have been strongly changed in function and composition) and further rearrangements in order to cramp the section's activities with the planning of IFLA all in all, the "Strategic Plan" in the future will be more clearly a target-planning-paper that directly cramps the section's activities and the targets of IFLA on a temporary basis.

The actual "work" of the section is being done by the "Standing Committee", a board consisting of 20 elected section members as well as further corresponding members. The rotational retirement of quite a number of members and – after the end of the next elections in spring 2011 – their replacement by new colleagues played a larger role within the business meetings of the section held on the verge of IFLA; last but not least because the chair of the section will change. On this occasion I would like to explicitly mention the possibility to campaign for the section and by means of this to get the chance to work with interesting and imaginative colleagues in this professional relevant group. The number of free places will be higher than ever in 2011 as it occurs that colleagues have been elected, but cannot take their place due to budgetary reasons of their "home" employers. The situation for German participants is therefore easier as there is a range of funding possibilities.

After the re-organization of IFLA in 2009 the professional-technical sections are now settled up under the roof of Division III Division of Library Services. The "core activities" ICADS and UNIMARC also belong to this division. My personal activities at the conference were very much formed by my own "duties" as Chair of the Information Technology Section and I report on them mainly.

The section concentrates in its work especially on the realization of events, be it the scope of the IFLA-congress in itself, and be it in pre- and satellite-conferences. Particularly the latter requires a longterm preparatory expenditure and strong partners on site.

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[1] http://www.ifla.org/en/publications/strategic-plan-28

The practiced working form within the Standing Committee basically consists of the creation of smaller working groups, which partly are connected with other activities outside of IFLA and which can go up to the founding of "Special Interest Groups". Where demanded (by IFLA or by impulsions from outside, the Section also expresses basic comments or guidelines (i.e. about digital libraries, about RFID) and documents relevant developments also via its newsletter, which is being published every six month within the IFLAnet.[2]

Section's work is concentrated at the annual world library congress IFLA does, in 2010 in Gothenburg, Sweden. The event took place from August 10 to August 15, 2010. Theme of the conference was "Open Access knowledge – promoting sustainable progress"; a total of 3.100 registered participants were guests in a generally splendid atmosphere and excellent organization. In her opening speech Ellen Tise – IFLA President – paid especially tribute to this engagement and good result under difficult circumstances (the Swedish quasi pitched in as hosts). Within five conference days and more working days before and after the actual conference there all in all 48 Standing Committees, five so-called Division Leadership Forums met and there were far more than 100 professional meetings.

The working meetings of the board in the beginning and in the end of the conference are being accomplished as public meetings and a number of colleagues use this possibility to inform themselves first-hand about work and themes of the section and vice versa also to bring in own visions to the discussion. Among other things, this is also meant to check the core area of the Section and maybe to revise it. From the perspective of the Standing Committee members, the already systematically addressed topics (see below) have been identified as relevant ones; in addition the highly rising meaning of "mobile devices" especially for the mediation of learning contents (and the supporting role of libraries) as well as the rising integration of library services to the services of others is being recognized.

Among others one important decision of the Section has to be noted: the Special Interest Group "Libraries and Web 2.0" shall not go on as the topic itself has been meanwhile widely integrated into the working area of libraries; this is because an own focused thematically work on this does no longer make sense.

Following an overview of the events, discussion focuses and planned activities of the Section, divided into their core themes (Semantic Web, Open Source Software in libraries, longterm preservation): [3]

1. Semantic Web and Libraries

The discussions which have begun during a pre-conference in the verge of the last WLIC-congress finally led to an initiative at W3C. Here, the 'library incubators group' has been launched with varied support from section members. This group supports the allocation of data from the environment of libraries

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[2] http://www.ifla.org/en/publications/information-technology-section-newsletters
[3] Nearly all presentations can be found as paper on the congress website; in many cases with translations into other languages; see as entrance for further navigation. http://www.ifla.org/en/conferences-session-day/2010-08-15 .

within the Semantic Web, analyses the demand for standardization and connects representatives of different communities. The working is being announced for May 2011 and will be presented on the next IFLA-congress in Puerto Rico 2011.

The big interest in this topic is also shown by the well-attended event facing the topic 'Libraries and the Semantic Web' [4]; there were some hundred participants, although it has been placed by the congress organizers to the rather inconvenient last and simultaneously departure day (Sunday morning). The large importance of the topic becomes also apparent through the fact that the Sections Cataloguing, Classification and Indexing and Knowledge were also involved in the preparations of the event. Moderated by Emmanuelle Bermès and Reinhard Altenhöner, Richard Wallis (Talis Company, UK) at first in his keynote speech presented the whole spectrum of potentials of the Semantic Web' technologies not only for the librarian world but also for the public institutions in the cultural environment. He pointed out with many examples how technologies of the Semantic Web lead to a more in knowledge and to entirely new conjunction-information; how they substantial improve research results and vice versa raise the visibility of stored data in libraries.

In his contribution "Initiatives to make standard library metadata models and structures available to the Semantic Web" Gordon Dunsire (University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland, UK) presented different initiatives which have been begun around the RDA-development (coming from IFLA) in order to define name spaces for the identification of resources in the Internet under the head of IFLA. It has been discussed shortly whether such standard-conform but rather particulate initiatives on the long run are too isolated and whether they should be more linked up with the basic efforts of W3C. Following that contribution, Steffen Hennicke (Humboldt University, Berlin) presented the "Europeana Data Model" which will have a leading role for Europeana from 2011 on for the mapping of community formats to the internal data structure. On the one hand, by means of this model Europeana wants to shape rich heterogeneous stored data for reuse, on the other hand Europeana also wants to reach the combination with the Semantic Web world. The realization is being planned in steps from 2011 on, OAI-ORE shall be also used for the documentation and the transfer of conjunctions between subcomponents of electronic objects.

Jan Hannemann (German National Library, Frankfurt, Germany) highlighted in his contribution the practical challenges for the supply of a linked data service: how are stored data of libraries (in this case norm data) translated into the syntax of the Semantic Web, which technical challenges have to be considered and which efforts have to be calculated respectively. Patrick Danowski (Institute of Science and Technology, Austria) emphasized from his point of view the primate of a legal licensing clarification for bibliographic data in the Semantic Web as a first step before other technical steps.

A rather systematical overview with the title "Porting library vocabularies to the Semantic Web and back. A win-win round trip" has been contributed by Bernard Vatant (Mondeca, Paris, France). He concentrated especially on quality attributes

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[4] Compare number 149 of the congress programme

which are valid when converting data and enable a broad acceptance of library data. Andreas Heß (German National Library, Frankfurt, Germany) closed the session with his overview lecture on "CONTENTUS – Towards Semantic Multi-Media Libraries". This lecture first of all demonstrated the possibilities of an integrated overall media type search in heterogeneous, semantically enriched stored data. Within an inspiring discussion a balancing act became obvious and succeeded: between a traditional librarian approach closely oriented at specific rules and regulations producing descriptive data and a new demand mainly to create connections between data which go beyond each single data producing community. Both parts were able to take over stimulating ideas and could understand it in a better way to cope with limits and restrictions of the other side respectively.

2. Support of libraries when using Open-Source-Software (OSS) (especially for library systems, preferably in non-developed countries)

The Standing Committee comes up with the need for direct assistance on the one hand by co-operations with corresponding initiatives (KOHA-Foundation, support of the Greenstone-Initiative) and on the other hand by the continuation of the collaboration with eIFL. Again the question has been negatively discussed whether there should be an own SIG for this topic: in view of the Sub-working group this possibility of co-operation does not lead towards the right track. However, activities like the consulting and contribution to the initiative of the IFLA-President for the completion of a strategic partnership with ICT4D will be continued.

The Section Information Technology has participated this year in the accomplishment and organization of the satellite meeting "Open Access and the Changing Role of Libraries". This well attended event which has been personally opened by the IFLA-President, Ellen Tise, made clear how complex and heterogeneous the international activities around Open Access and libraries have prospered so far; it became obvious that German initiatives and projects also in this global perspective have a high standing and attention. In this meeting, also technical questions played a special role and it was surely no coincidence that some of the developments in the area of the Open Source Movement seemed to be an anticipated history of the Open Access Movement. [5]

In the context of bringing up the developing countries to the international information structure, copyright issues play a more and more important role and the importance of Open Access rises. Therefore, the section organized a panel discussion about the topic 'Access and barriers to information", participants were amongst others Christian Engström, member of the European Parliament and the Pirate Party. Audience and panel discussed the basic problems of censorship and intervention in the internet together with Stuart Hamilton (Senior Policy Adviser, IFLA) and Edmund Balnaves (IT-Section). The event has been enriched by a case study from Mexico facing the handling of the mega company Google; by contributions broaching the issue of information management of the Finnish

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[5] http://www.kb.se/aktuellt/utbildningar/2010/Open-Access-and-the-Changing-Role-of-Libraries/

parliament's library as well as by neighborhood-libraries in Chicago and its support of citizens during the democratic participation.[6]

Further considerations of the section veer very precise towards an assistance- or support-project respectively for the construction of smaller library systems with help of Open Source Software in order to give offers for the development of the information infrastructure in developing countries. For financing this, the connection to a foundation is being searched; pre-talks took place on the congress' verge in Gothenburg.

Facing the next IFLA-congress, there is the intention to conduct an event with the topic Open Source Software-Systems/Open Access and Access-Statistics, together with other sections: on the one hand, scientists have already great expectations towards libraries and Open Access-operating institutions also in the so-called Third World. On the other hand, the reliability of the system-delivered figures due to the different use counting standards is little.

3. Digital Preservation

This topic plays a significant role in more and more institutions. Especially archiving of web-sites in its technical and organizational aspects also engages institutions which have no explicit mandate for collecting this kind of publications. The Section has discussed several options for offers on this field and plans an event during the next IFLA-congress. Furthermore, the section considers a stronger formalised co-operation with the IIPC (International Internet Preservation Consortium).

In Gothenburg together with ICADS, the Section created an event with the issue "Development of systems for long-term storage and preservation of library collections", which was well attended and which will be presented in an own chapter (see below). [7]

In another co-operative event conducted with other sections (Knowledge Management, Continuing Professional Development & Workplace Learning) with the topic ""Global learning systems" the IT-Section especially broad in the facet of technical innovations. [8] In the meanwhile, there exist a plurality of global and all-time available services (impressively presented in the contribution of Frank Cervone), which libraries can take into their portfolio and to which they can also contribute – this has been shown by numerous case studies from the Philippines, Zimbawve, South Africa, India, Canada and United States. The further education of the library staff has been emphasized as very important.

Based on this event, there are considerations for Puerte Rico to conduct a pre-conference facing the inter-relations between library new buildings and new technologies together with the Section Library buildings and Equipment.

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[6] Compare number 140 of the congress program.
[7] Compare number 157 of the congress program.
[8] Compare Number 107 of the congress program.

Additionally, I attended in my function as chair together with Edmund Balnaves the meeting of the IFLA-President for the information society, which has originally been arisen from the "World summit for the Information Society (WSIS). Above all, this meeting dealt with the role of libraries in the global development process and the co-operation with the ICT4-Initiative. Many sections and groups within IFLA deal with development in the broadest sense and this not only in the typical developing countries and so does the Section IT (see above). Within the meeting in Gothenburg the topics were information about ICT4D-related projects through IFLA Sections or libraries, information about the meaning of Open-Access-Models and Open-Source-Software in the development process and other topics. The activities of the group can be followed via the IFLA-Blog http://blogs.ilfa.org/ict4d/.

In recent months, has - in addition to many smaller details, explanations, contacts - largely taken place to prepare the program in San Juan. This will take place in cooperation with other sections and lead to a series of interesting events.

In addition it can be reported that the process of creation of Special Interest Groups was formally pushed further and has resulted in the foundation of two groups:

1. Semantic Web Special Interest Group (SWSIG)
2. SIG Radio frequency identification (RFID SIG)

In addition, the dissolution of the SIG library 2.0 was requested from IFLA HQ.

Frankfurt, 2011-08-05

Reinhard Altenhöner, chair