

Celebrating 20 Years



**A CONCISE
HISTORY
OF THE
IFLA
SECTION
ON LIBRARY
SERVICES TO
MULTICULTURAL
POPULATIONS**

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A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE
IFLA SECTION ON LIBRARY SERVICES
TO MULTICULTURAL POPULATIONS

BY MARIE F. ZIELINSKA

Designed by Donna Serafin
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PREFACE

It was a privilege to put together this brief history of the Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations with which I was intimately linked since its inception. But after 20 years it is time to retire and pass the baton to the younger generation of librarians. I would like to express my heartfelt thank you to IFLA and its Headquarters staff for giving me the opportunity to work for the benefit of multicultural librarianship, and to all my colleagues, older and younger, whom I met over the years through IFLA. They shared with me their wisdom, their experiences and offered me their friendship that I shall treasure for the rest of my life. Special thanks to my closest friend, Benedikte Kragh-Schwarz, with whom I worked from day one and whose commitment to our ideals, unwavering friendship and willingness to undertake any task for the benefit of the Section was always a true inspiration and support in every undertaking.

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nniversaries are always an invitation to review and evaluate the past. So let's take this opportunity to look at the history of the Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations from its very modest beginning as a Committee, through a Round Table to its present status of a Section with a very active program including satellite meetings, workshops and program sessions during conferences, and a series of successful cooperative ventures with other IFLA Sections and Round Tables.

Library service to ethnolinguistic minority groups has a century long tradition but its goal was, for many years, not to support minority languages and cultures but rather to speed up the process of assimilation of immigrants in the host society. Large-scale population movements caused by World War II and post-war changes in socio-political conditions in many countries, as well as a sudden surge of interest in national roots and ethnic heritage, made the problem of library service to ethnolinguistic groups a prominent issue in librarianship widely debated in the late 1950's through the 1960's and 1970's. The problem attracted the attention of local and even national governments but the number of libraries actively involved in providing this type of service in each country remained limited. Those involved in this area of work have increasingly felt a need for contact with colleagues in other countries.

In 1973, when Marie F. Zielinska was given the task of organizing at the National Library of Canada, a central library serving all Canadian ethnolinguistic communities through the network of public libraries, she gathered an informal circle of librarians interested in the exchange of information and ideas by correspondence. Some members from the group had the opportu-

nity to meet in person at the IFLA conference in Brussels in 1977. Initial talks on the possibility of creating a suitable international forum for exchange of information bore fruit only three years later. In April 1980, at the request of Johannes Daugbjerg from Denmark, then chairman of the IFLA Division of Libraries Serving the General Public, as well as chair of its Public Libraries Section, IFLA's Professional Board agreed to create a Working Group for a three-year period. The Working Group was given the task to "establish a forum of communication to enable the exchange of information on the present state of the art and on new initiatives in various countries" as well as "to discuss problems about the supply of library materials both printed and audiovisual" including questions concerning the organization of publishing and the book trade in various countries, the exchange of bibliographic information and the possibilities for cooperative acquisitions.

1981

The original members appointed by IFLA to the Working Group were: Marie F. Zielinska from the National Library of Canada, Benedikte Kragh-Schwarz from the Gentofte Kommunebibliotek in Kopenhagen, Denmark, Miklos Gulyas of the Staten Kulturrad in Stockholm, Sweden and Gyula Kertesz of the State Gorky Library in Budapest, Hungary. The latter did not seem interested in the appointment and never took part in any project of the Working Group. Marie F. Zielinska assumed the role of the chair and Benedikte Kragh-Schwarz that of its secretary. In the first year the Group devoted its time mainly to collecting information on existing library services to ethnolinguistic communities in various countries, to identifying problems and to setting-up priorities to be tackled in the following years. The first annual report on the Working Group's activities was presented at the IFLA conference in Leipzig in 1981. From the first investigations it was clear that the most important issue was the creation of an information clearinghouse. The second annual report was presented

the following year at the conference in Montreal, as part of the open meeting of the Division of Libraries Serving the General Public and attracted 140 participants. Already in Montreal the Working Group attempted to present an attractive, educational program as Leonard Wertheimer, from the Metro Toronto Reference Library, delivered a keynote address; Marie F. Zielinska presented the report of the Working Group's activities in 1981-1982, while the Multilingual Biblioservice of the National Library of Canada provided an exhibit of acquisition tools for books in various languages which attracted much attention.

1983

Early in 1983 Radha Rasmussen, professor at Monash University in Australia, and Michael Foster, librarian at the Commonwealth Institute in London, England, joined the Working Group and a number of corresponding members reinforced the team with their expertise in the development of international relations. It became apparent at this time, that within the three-year period of its mandate, the Working Group would only be able to break the ground for international cooperation and a permanent body would be needed to carry on the work. Accordingly, a request for the transformation of the Working Group into an IFLA Round Table was submitted to the Professional Board. The request was approved in the spring of 1983, at which time Michael Foster assumed the chairmanship of the new Round Table on Library Services to Ethnic and Linguistic Minorities. Benedikte Kragh-Schwarz remained as secretary and Miklos Gulyas assumed later the role of the treasurer. Other former members of the working Group created an informal "Executive Committee."

1984

During the meeting of the Round Table in Nairobi in 1984, requests were received for the election of more members of the Committee, particularly so that people from Africa could be represented. Under the constitution and statutes of IFLA, Round Tables are small,

limited groups of persons with two not elected, but nominated officers. With a mailing list of would-be members of over 170, it was clear that the Round Table outgrew its definition both in size of would-be membership and the quantity and quality of work undertaken. A request to change the status of the Round Table to that of a Section was submitted to the Professional Board; as an interim measure the Executive Committee was renamed the Advisory Board and new members were invited to join the group. These were: Dr. E. J. Josey, founder of the American Library Association (ALA) Black Caucus and the immediate Past President of ALA; Dr. Patrick Valentine, Director of North Carolina Foreign Language Center, and Neville Price, Community Outreach Librarian, in London's Kensington and Chelsea area. Gyula Kertesz resigned upon taking up another post and his place was filled by Endre Bilkei-Pap, Head of the German Nationality Libraries in the Gorky State Library in Budapest.

1984

The Professional Board accepted the request for a change in status and at the 1986 conference in Tokyo the Round Table became the Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations and Michael Foster was elected its first chair. The Section is a part of the Division of Libraries Serving the General Public (Section no. 32).

Under the dynamic leadership of Michael Foster, work started immediately on six projects defined by the Round Table as needing immediate attention. Since the creation of a clearinghouse proved to be too complicated at the time, it remained an ultimately desirable goal. As an interim method, it was decided to publish periodical bibliographies of articles and books from as many countries of the world as possible. Several lists appeared, edited by Neville Price, from material submitted by corresponding members of the informal Advisory Committee, and in cooperation with LISA.

The second successful venture was the publication of a newsletter for communication with corresponding members of the Round Table, whose number surpassed 170 librarians at this time, and for use in public relations with the library profession at large. Two issues were published by the former Working Group in February and August 1983, and three issues in the New Series were published by the Round Table in May 1984, May 1985 and July 1985. The newsletter was originally free of charge but soon the requests passed 500 copies. With an average number of 60 pages and the growing cost of postage, a modest subscription fee was established. This was approved by the Professional Board and thus the *Journal of Multicultural Librarianship* was born. The first issue appeared in July 1986 and five volumes of three issues each were published. The last issue (volume 5, no. 3) appeared in 1991. Unfortunately as a result of organizational changes in IFLA, individual Sections were forbidden to have their own paid publications and the publication of the *Journal* had to be suspended. To maintain a forum for a wide dissemination of papers presented at conferences and to make the work of the Section widely known, Charles Townley, then Chair of the Section, tried to negotiate the incorporation of the *Journal* into the brand new *Multicultural Review* published by the Greenwood Publishing Group. In the long run however, this cooperation did not prove workable.

1987

The third very successful project of the Round Table was the preparation of *Guidelines for library service to ethnolinguistic communities*. This task was given to Anne Holmes and Derek Whitehead, members of the Standards Subcommittee of the Working Group on Multicultural Library Services of Victoria, Australia. After many consultations, the *Guidelines* were published in 1987, translated into all official IFLA languages and also Chinese, Japanese and Italian, and then widely distributed by the Section. The development of electronic media and the introduction of new forms of transmitting information in the last decade of the twentieth century

created the necessity to revise the *Guidelines*. This was done by Virginia Ballance and Marie F. Zielinska with the help of Charles Townley and Benedikte Kragh-Schwarz. The *Guidelines*, 2nd edition, was published in 1998 in English and French and work continues on translation into the other official languages of IFLA.

The fourth project undertaken by the Round Table was the preparation of pamphlets on various aspects of multicultural librarianship that would become the basis of a comprehensive manual. For a variety of reasons this project could not be implemented; but a manual, first of its kind in library literature, was prepared and published by Saur as IFLA publication no. 59 under the title *Multicultural Librarianship: an International Handbook*. Individual chapters were prepared by recognized authorities in the field from various countries and were edited by Marie F. Zielinska with the help of Frank Kirkwood. The manual gives comprehensive coverage of the subject from the nature and needs of multicultural populations, through the organization of library services, acquisitions, cataloguing and automation, to marketing, public relations and promotion.

Project five involved cooperation with other Sections and Round Tables of IFLA. The first target was the establishment of close relations with ROTNAC as acquisition of library materials in other languages presented and continues to present major problems for many libraries. Slowly cooperation extended to other IFLA units such as Libraries for the Blind, Mobile Libraries, Regional Section: Africa, Classification and Indexing, Management and Marketing, Public Libraries and Information Technology.

Cooperation with the latter resulted in a very successful satellite meeting in Tokyo in 1986 (project six) on **Automated systems for access to multilingual and multiscript library materials: problems and solutions**. It brought to light the importance of cooperation in the

design of automated systems, an overview of the present state of the art, and the necessity of developing internationally recognized standards for transliteration of non-Roman scripts. The satellite meeting in Tokyo demonstrated clearly how profitable such meetings are, particularly if they are organized in a city or even country other than the conference itself. They allow local librarians to meet colleagues from all over the world, get new ideas and establish valuable contacts. The participants on the other hand have a chance to familiarize themselves with different countries and the set-up of local, ethnolinguistic communities and their special needs and interests, and to visit local libraries. Obviously, the success of the satellite meeting depends not only on the leadership of the organizing Section but also on a strong, committed local arrangements committee backed up by local library authorities.

The following year Michael Foster arranged a satellite meeting in London entitled **Multiculturalism and libraries: issues and trends**. Preceding the IFLA conference in Sydney, Australia, a three-day satellite meeting was organized in conjunction with the Working Group on Multicultural Library Services in Victoria which explored the topic of the **Aged, ethnicity and information**.

1989

In 1989 a satellite meeting was held in Rennes, France and in 1990 a very successful meeting was organized in Eskilstuna, Sweden, under the title **New methods and new media in library services to multicultural populations**.

1991

One of the most memorable satellite meetings (because of its location and timing) was in Riga in 1991 and organized by Inese Smith, a Section committee member from Loughborough University of Technology, United Kingdom, the Latvia State Library and the Library Association of Latvia. It attracted a very large audience of librarians who were eager after many years of

isolation by the Communist regime to meet colleagues from other parts of the world. A second conference on automated systems for libraries with multiscrypt collections planned for New Delhi the following year had to be postponed because no local arrangement committee could be found. Instead the Section held a quite successful half-day workshop organized jointly with the Round Table on Audiovisual Media, exploring the international market for spoken books, their production, as well as copyright and legislation matters.

1993

The Section's plans for a second pre-conference on **Automated systems for access to multilingual and multiscrypt library materials** materialized in 1993 in Madrid. As at the conference in Tokyo, this satellite meeting was organized jointly with the Section on Information Technology and sponsored by the National Library of Spain. The main objectives of the conference were to review developments in technology and systems which handle and interface with non-Roman scripts, to evaluate progress in the field since the Tokyo satellite meeting and to depict areas requiring further work and international cooperation.

1994

1994 was a most interesting one as IFLA held its conference for the first time in Cuba. The Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations (SLSMP) held a satellite meeting in Trinidad, Cuba in cooperation with the Round Table on Mobile Libraries on the theme **Mobile libraries serving multicultural populations**. It was truly enlightening as the speakers examined mobile libraries ranging from huge semi-trailer units in the Scandinavian countries and in Australia, to such vehicles like a bibliohorse in Columbia, bookboat in Venezuela (we later had the opportunity to visit a biblioboat in Bangkok), to book bicycles in Nigeria. They showed the determination of librarians to provide library materials to the smallest and most remote communities.

In Istanbul (1995) the traditional satellite meeting

1995

was replaced by a full-day workshop on **Library services to Turkish people living abroad** and was organized in cooperation with ROTNAC. Another half-day workshop was held with the Africa Section exploring **Collection development for libraries serving African populations**. A full-day workshop format was chosen also for the conference in Beijing. This one was organized jointly with the Section on Classification and Indexing under the title **Serving multicultural populations in the 21st century: universal standardized subject headings – present status and future prospects**. It explored a most important and previously neglected issue of subject headings. Another workshop on **Storytelling** was held with the Section for Children's Libraries and the Section for School Libraries. It introduced current and historical roles of storytelling in various parts of the world and its prevalence in different cultures.

1997

A regular satellite meeting returned to the Section's program in 1997 in Aarhus, Denmark preceding the conference in Copenhagen. It focused on the globalization and the rapid changes to multicultural societies, the changing role of the library in a global multicultural society, the ability to communicate around the world through new information technologies with special emphasis on Scandinavian experiences and information technology projects. During the conference itself a half-day workshop was presented jointly with the Library Theory and Research Section on the **Need for research in multicultural librarianship**.

The following year the satellite meeting organized by Asbjorn Langeland in Norway focused on the very specialized theme of **Library services to indigenous peoples** living in the northern part of our hemisphere from Canada through Northern Europe to North Asia.

In Bangkok, the Section cooperated again with the Africa Section presenting a half-day workshop on **Recent developments for libraries in Africa** as a result of

the passage from the oral tradition to written literature and development of indigenous languages.

This detailed list of satellite meetings and workshops shows clearly that the Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations cooperated effectively from its inception with various other units of IFLA and that multicultural aspects are inherent to every aspect of librarianship.

Aside from satellite meetings and workshops, the Section presented open sessions on a variety of topics at many conferences. In the beginning these presentations were published in *the Journal of Multicultural Librarianship*. After its demise, they were published whenever possible, in writing in the booklets published by IFLA for the conferences, and presently they are available on the web site IFLANET. The satellite meetings resulted in a number of publications published by IFLA or by library authorities where the meetings took place. The Section also has a publicity brochure which is updated every few years.

This short overview shows clearly that the creation of the Section was an answer to a real need for international cooperation and exchange of information in the field of library services to multicultural populations. The Section touched in its work almost all aspects of library work from the multicultural point of view using a variety of approaches and tools. Some projects were more successful, some less, but each provided a fresh look at old library practices and showed what is workable and what requires wider resources for its implementation. Each chair brought his or her own approach and point of view but the overall goal remained the same: to serve all segments of the population regardless of their ethnic origin, language and cultural background.

I hope sincerely that the Section will always be true to this goal and will remain a vital and active unit of IFLA.

APPENDICES

List of Chairpersons

1985 - 1989	Foster, Michael
1989 - 1991	Zielinska, Marie
1991 - 1993	Townley, Charles
1993 - 1995	Skrzeszewski, Stan
1995 - 1999	Carro-Rehaut, Antoine
1999 - 2001	Hubert, Souad

List of Publications

- 1987 ***Automated systems for access to multilingual and multiscrypt library materials: problems and solutions: papers from the pre-conference held at Nihon DaigakuKaikan Tokyo, Japan, August 21-22, 1986.*** Edited by Christine Bossmayer and Stephen W. Massil for the IFLA Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations and the Section on Information Technology. Munchen: K.G. Saur, 1987. (IFLA Publication 38) ISBN 3-598-211768-4
- 1987 ***Multicultural communities: guidelines for library services.*** Compiled by Anne Holmes and Derek Whitehead. London: IFLA Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations, 1987.
- 1989 ***Multiculturalism and libraries: issues and trends: proceedings of a pre-conference seminar held at the Commonwealth Institute (London) August 13-15, 1987.*** Edited by Radha Rasmussen and Maria-Teresa Herrera-Keightley. London: IFLA Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations, 1989. ISBN 1-870-66701-8

- 1990 | ***The aged, ethnicity and information: proceedings of a three-day pre-IFLA seminar, held at St. Mary's College, University of Melbourne, August 22-24, 1988.*** Edited by Anne Holmes and Sabina Robertson. Melbourne, Victoria: Melbourne Working Group on Multicultural Library Services, 1990. ISBN 0959412468.
- 1991 | ***New methods and new media in library services to multicultural populations: proceedings of the seminar, Eskilstuna, Sweden, August 25-17, 1990.*** Tryck. Kontorsservice, 1991.
- 1992 | ***Multicultural librarianship: an international handbook.*** Edited by Marie F. Zielinska with Francis T. Kirkwood under the auspices of the IFLA Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations. Munchen: K.G. Saur, 1992. ISBN 3-598-21787-0.
- 1994 | ***Automated systems for access to multilingual and multiscrypt materials: proceedings of the second IFLA satellite meeting, Madrid, Spain, August 18-19, 1993.*** Edited by Sally McCallum and Monica Ertel for the Section on Information Technology, Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations and the Section on Cataloguing. Munchen: K.G.Saur, 1994. (IFLA Publication 70) ISBN3-598-21797-8.
- 1996 | ***Mobile libraries serving multicultural populations: proceedings of the IFLA pre-conference seminar of the 60th IFLA general conference, Trinidad,Cuba, August 16-17, 1994.*** Organized jointly by IFLA '94 Organizing Committee, the Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations and the Round Table on Mobile Libraries, 1996.

1997 ***Serving multicultural populations in the 21st century: universal standardized subject headings – present status and future prospects: papers from the workshop at the 62nd Conference, Beijing, China, August 26, 1996.***
Edited by Marcia Lei Zeng and Suzine Har Nicolescu.
Prepared and coordinated by Eisuke Naito. Tokyo: NACISIS, 1997.

1997 ***Library service in a multicultural society: papers from the IFLA satellite meeting, Aarhus, Denmark. August 26-28, 1997.*** Edited by Niels E. Pedersen.
Hillerod, Denmark: Union of Danish Librarians, Professional Group on Library Services to Immigrants and Refugees, 1997. ISBN 87-986565-0-3 (Special issue of *Brogede Blade*).

1998 ***Library services to indigenous people: conference papers and closing remarks from the IFLA satellite conference, Tromso, Norway. August 12-14th 1998.***
Arranged by the IFLA Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations.

1998 ***Multicultural communities: guidelines for library service. 2nd edition, revised.*** IFLA Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations, 1998.

Periodical Publications

1986-1991 ***Journal of Multicultural Librarianship***
vols. 1 - 5 (3 issues per volume)

1991 ***Newsletter***
No. 1, Fall 1991 Fall/Spring 1995/96
No. 2, Spring 1992 Fall/Spring 1996/97
No. 3, Fall 1992 Fall/Spring 1997/98
No. 4, Spring 1993 Spring/Summer vol.1, no. 2, 1998
No. 5, Spring 1995 Fall/Spring, vol.1, no. 3, 1999
 Fall/Winter vol.2, no. 1, 2000