

IFLA CORE ACTIVITIES: REPORT OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

DR CHRIS CHIA — CHAIR
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD OF SINGAPORE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

- 1 The IFLA financial situation and the intention expressed by some current programme hosts to stop hosting programmes, has prompted the IFLA Core Programmes Committee to review the IFLA Core Activities, to look for alternative funding sources and/or hosts for existing activities and/or new activities that IFLA might consider supporting.

OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

- 2 The objectives included monitoring and enhancing core programmes, widening support and developing new ideas for the core programmes.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 3 The guiding principles included looking into modernising and streamlining activities with a focus on the needs of national libraries; establishing a timeframe for each programme, establishing quantum, type and support by donor and supporting countries; and creating an accountability framework.

MAJOR DELIVERABLE

- 4 The Committee will submit a Preliminary Report on IFLA Core Activities highlighting the findings, observations and recommendations, for deliberations by IFLA Governing Board and the CDNL.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- 5 The following are some observations and recommendations made by the Review Committee:

A) **CONCERNS**

The Review Committee was concerned that:

- i Some Core Programmes were becoming entrenched and less able to renew themselves;
- ii Quality of staff was variable and reporting sometimes inadequate;
- iii Despite annual appeals, the inflow of funds to IFLA's core programme fund was drying up (particularly in the case of non-earmarked donations from national libraries which did not actually host a programme), although Programmes with their own external sources of dedicated project funding fared better;
- iv National Library hosts were looking for other structural options (e.g. reducing funding while still housing the programme office, or continuing funding but making the programme's work better respond to CDNL's priorities, or in the long term divesting themselves of the programme entirely).

B) POTENTIALS

- i It was noted that there was potential for Core Programmes to take on new areas of work and develop projects more effectively.
- ii The Core Programmes were useful mechanisms for joint work with related professional NGOs (museums, archives, et al). Some members (particularly those in the developing countries and the 're-emerging' countries of Eastern Europe) still saw value in the traditional work and products of the Programmes;

C) ISSUES & RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The following are some issues and recent developments that could impact decisions as to the future of the IFLA Core Programmes:

- i Future roles and activities of UAP and of the BL IFLA Office. Interim arrangements are being put in place for current activities of the Office, pending further dialogue between IFLA and the British Library.
- ii Clustering of existing Core Activities such as FAIFE, UAP, AND CLM around themes such as "Information Society" or "Access to Information", under which issues such as digital divide and e-government could be subsumed.
- iii The question of Die Deutsche Bibliothek's continuation for hosting of a joint UBC/UDT Core Activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6 The Review Committee provided general suggestions that relate to governance, outcome, structure, new activities, and proposed strategies for new sources of funding.

A) GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

GOVERNANCE

- i Appoint an Advisory Committee for each Core Activity whose primary task would be the preparation of a strategic plan for a 3-year period (2002-04). The Advisory Committee would also be involved in rationalising, renewing or improving the performance of the Core programmes.

- ii Formalise agreement between IFLA and each host institution covering duration of commitment to the programme, financial matters, staffing, planning and reporting with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with each host country.
- iii Maintain strong links between the Core Programmes and the relevant IFLA Divisions (including Sections and other groups) to ensure that Programmes do not get out of step with the interests of the membership at large and that Sections can benefit from support from Programme offices.
- iv Re-organise the management of existing entities within IFLA and indicate strongly and clearly its strategic directions.
- v Institute a more systematic reporting on the activities and regular evaluation by IFLA.

OUTCOMES

- i Focus of the Programmes should be on outcomes, rather than on the outputs.
- ii Establish regular 3-yearly audits of the Programmes' work to routinely consider the continuing need for each Programme and the extent to which its activities have contributed to attaining objectives described in the statement of 'IFLA's Professional Priorities'

STRUCTURES

- i Analyse and where possible unbundled the content of the current Programmes. Unproductive activities should be terminated, alternative arrangements could be made for non-core activities of value to a particular sector of the IFLA membership, activities of continuing relevance to the wider membership should be strengthened by being combined if possible across the boundaries of the present Programmes, and consideration given to incorporating new work areas.
- ii Any criteria developed for approval of new Programmes should include the principle that Programmes operate predominantly within the library and information sector.
- iii Consideration should be given to adopting a 'network' structure for those Programmes where this would be appropriate, following the model of PAC. Consideration could also be given to developing the IFLA Regional Offices to increase their ability effectively to support Programme activities in their regions.
- iv Ideas for sub-sets of existing programmes that various national (or other) libraries might take responsibility for. While PAC is now organised along regional centres, it might be good to also allocate responsibility for specific programmes under PAC's aegis. For example, The National Library of Australia might lead a digital preservation programme, and the Library of Congress a mass deacidification programme.
- v Each member of CDNL should think about programmes it already has underway that might be strengthened and / or have broader impact if they were also considered IFLA core activities. For example the Library of Congress's on-going programmes such as its Collaborative Digital Reference Service (CDRS), MARC 21 development, Center for the Book and Z39.50 maintenance agency activities could be brought under the IFLA umbrella at no cost to IFLA.

- vi Consider whether all the Programmes or proposed clusters should be authorised to handle the full range of activities (conceptualisation, policy, project management, training and publication, fund-raising), or whether some of these aspects should be done by a different 'programme' – e.g. an IFLA training agency operating short courses on behalf of all programmes, or a central publication unit able to produce documents (reports, training materials, etc.) quickly, to a reasonable standard, at a reasonable price, and in relevant languages.
- vii Other more important measures could include : drafting of a standard contract, agreement or memorandum of understanding between IFLA and each institution hosting an activity (cf. the current PAC/BnF arrangement); developing a standard professional profile for programme staff, and instituting performance assessments (or making those carried out by host institutions available in confidence to IFLA management).

NEW ACTIVITIES

- i IFLA should be very careful in setting up new activities. However, the importance of the problem of preservation of digital information would justify a new programme. Apart from that, the development of existing activities such as CLM, FAIFE and UBC should have the highest priority.

PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR NEW SOURCES OF FUNDING

- i It is important to make a specific appeal and to organise timely and sufficient feedback on results as part of a professional communication policy. The appeal for funding has so far attracted only NLG17, 534 more than IFLA's receipt for 2000.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXISTING PROGRAMMES

- 7 Recommendations are also provided by the Review Committee that were specific to existing programmes. These are as follows:

ALP

- 8 It is important to receive feedback from the countries that are supposed to benefit from the programme and to have regular evaluations of the programme (taking into account developments in Division VIII and the views of the next IFLA President).
- 9 It is proposed that the ALP programme be continued more or less as at present, but consider ways to give it a stronger presence in the IFLA Regional Offices and seek closer working relationship with regional offices of relevant intergovernmental aid agencies.
- 10 Its scope should include the promotion of legal deposit and preservation of the national heritage

CLM

- i It is recommended that IFLA continue with CLM, also giving it the copyright-related activities previously attaching to UAP. Or alternatively, include CLM in the cluster of activities around the themes of the 'Information Society' or 'Access to Information'. and empower it to deal with IFLA relations with publishers, provide input to IFLA policy on such matters as licensing or copyright, and follow WIPO and WTO developments as well as developments of the US Digital Millennium Copyright Act and its implications for libraries.
- ii The scope of its coverage should include support for the legal deposit mission and free access to deposited materials. For this purpose, CLM should work closely with the IFLA sections concerned by copyright issues, CDNL and the joint steering group IFLA/IPA

FAIFE

- i FAIFE is a new activity, which had a good start. It should be continued. However, to the extent that it could conflict with IFLA's independent stance, the Committee proposes that IFLA reconsider whether FAIFE as presently defined is the appropriate vehicle for this activity, or whether it should be oriented more towards advising IFLA on 'information society'-related issues, and referring other issues to established NGOs or UN or other national or intergovernmental bodies as appropriate.

PAC

- i It is an important programme, which started 15 years ago. The general impression is positive, but it is time for an official evaluation. The focus of the programme is on the preservation of paper documents. Apart from that, the preservation of digital information is a serious problem. This is a new area, which would justify a new and separate core activity.
- ii Continue to expand PAC to bring in a wider range of activities. Bring in more partners and broaden scope.
- iii Consider also allocating responsibility for specific programmes under PAC's aegis. For example, The National Library of Australia might lead a digital preservation programme, and the Library of Congress a mass deacidification programme. At a sub-regional level, CONSAL (Congress of South East Asian Librarians) has embarked on a programme for Preservation and Conservation Training and could extend this programme to others in the Asia and Oceania region.

UBCIM

- i Continue the core bibliographic/metadata activities and publishing programme, but in a different structure, including XML and Dublin Core.
- ii Proposed that UBCIM be unbundled between Germany and Portugal. But in its new role, Die Deutsche Bibliothek will not only have to contribute to the evolution of MARC 21 but also to take into consideration the new formats and the new languages in relation to the Internet development. Also, the plans for integration of non-IFLANET UDT activities into UBC activities should be explicitly endorsed.
- iii Endorse Die Deutsche Bibliothek's offer to host the UBCIM programme on the same level until 2003 and the UBC part of the from 2003.
- iv Support the proposal to transfer the responsibility for UNIMARC from Die Deutsche Bibliothek to the National Library of Portugal with effect from 2003.
- v Endorse a proposal to set up a consortium of UNIMARC users.

UAP

- i Consider whether the focus should be on 'publications' or on 'information' and split up or merge activities with other programmes: e.g. aspects related to access to publications could be linked with equivalent aspects of the other programmes, and the 'access to information' aspect could be part of a new 'Information Society' programme perhaps together with FAIFE.
- ii Need for a thorough study of the development of UAP in a digital environment. An evaluation of the international interlending voucher system is necessary because the British Library has notified IFLA Headquarters that it does not wish to continue to host and administer the scheme. If IFLA wishes the scheme to continue it would need to find an alternative host.
- iii Such a programme must increasingly evolve towards a resource sharing programme and its main role will have to become more informative regarding the location of materials.

UDT

- i The programme should be unbundled: IFLANET maintenance should be continued as a normal business activity of IFLA, but the other advisory work of UDT could be attached to a cluster of activities around the theme 'Technical Services'.
- ii Plans for integration of non-IFLANET UDT activities into UBC activities should be explicitly endorsed.
- iii Issues of interconnectivity standards, unique resource names, persistent identifiers should be dealt with in this broader programme, which should be strongly supported.