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# International Library Associations

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## ABSTRACT

THIS ARTICLE PRESENTS AN OVERVIEW of the types of international library associations which exist today. These include large, truly global, associations; large associations which are adding international components; small associations with membership of a specific professional grouping or type of library; small associations which focus on a specific subject area; and local or regional library associations which have a very circumscribed constituency. Issues and trends which exemplify these associations include their ability to communicate with their members, their ability to create relevant programs and conferences, and their need to evaluate their successes. This article will highlight five international library associations which typify the trends.

## INTRODUCTION

International organizations have experienced a recent remarkable increase in numbers. Several possible reasons for the growth of international library associations since World War II are the following:

- Our shrinking world has caused increasing awareness of other parts of the world with accompanying demands for access to information from those areas.
- Growth of information and publishing throughout the world.
- Awareness through increased automation of resources in other parts of the world.
- Growth of international business interests in the second half of the

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twentieth century after the war.

- More sophisticated users who demand specialized services and increased knowledge of the access to information resources by their librarians.

The *World Guide to Library, Archive, and Information Science Associations* defines international associations as "organizations whose membership includes two or more countries. . . . They may be general in nature . . . or specialized . . ." (Fang & Songe, 1990, p. iv). In its 1990 edition, the *World Guide* identified seventy-six international associations based on the returned questionnaires sent to each association and the compilers' knowledge of additional associations. The *World Guide* notes that there were thirty-three international associations in 1973, forty-one in 1976, fifty-eight in 1980, and seventy-six in 1990 (p. vii). Dates of establishment are broken down in Table 1.

TABLE 1.  
DATES OF ASSOCIATIONS ESTABLISHED BY DECADE

Decade	Number of Associations Established
1895	1*
1927	1**
1930	1***
1940	3
1950	11
1960	17
1970	23
1980	17
No Date listed	7

\*International Federation for Information & Documentation, FID

\*\*International Federation of Library Associations  
& Institutions, IFLA

\*\*\*Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film, FIAF

Another reason for this growth in numbers is the development of regional and specialized library associations. For several decades, FID (International Federation for Information & Documentation), founded in 1895, IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations & Insti-

tutions), founded in 1927 and, to a certain extent, the conferences and congresses of leading library associations, such as the American Library Association and the Library Association (of the United Kingdom), filled the need for librarians from around the world to meet. The *World Encyclopedia of Library and Information Services* offers a detailed early history of international library organizations, pointing out that: "One of IFLA's major roles has been as a centralizing organization precipitating the emergence of specialist groups that become part of its federal structure" (Rayward, 1993, p. 386).

In fact, an analysis of the seventy-six international organizations listed in the *World Guide* reveals that only six of the associations listed there could strictly be called general and fully global. The others fall into either regional groupings or specialized topical or professional groupings, as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2.  
REGIONAL OR SPECIALIZED TOPICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Regional associations (Examples: Middle East, Africa, Latin America)	13
Specialized topical or professional groupings:	
Agriculture	3
Archives	12
Art and Music	6
Bibliographic control	3
Library education	4
Medical and Health-related	3
Religion and Theology	3
Other specialized subjects	9
Types of libraries	10

This article will highlight five international library associations which typify the trends. Only two of them are included in the *World Guide* list of international associations. The other three illustrate important trends in international library associations. The five associations are as follows:

1. The International Association of Technological University Libraries (IATUL), which typifies an association of members from a specific type of library.
2. The International Association of Agricultural Librarians and Docu-

mentalists (IAALD), now known as the International Association of Agricultural Information Specialists, which typifies an association of members from a specific subject area or discipline.

3. The Special Libraries Association (SLA), which fits the *World Guide's* definition of international association, but which was listed incorrectly in the national section, representing the role of the very large library association struggling with an international identity.
4. The International Librarianship Round Table of the Arizona Library Association (AzLA ILRT), which illustrates a trend to localize the relationship between librarians in several countries. Associations covering sub-areas of countries, such as state associations, were not in the scope of the *World Guide*.
5. The Transborder Library Forum/Foro Transfronterizo de Bibliotecas (Foro), which represents a unique grassroots regional development of the 1990s.

Descriptions of each of these five associations will include historical information about their founding; mission, purpose, and goals of the current organization; profile of the membership components of the association; services to its membership, such as conferences, publications, and other forms of communication; and future plans. No formalized history of the ILRT and little on the Foro has been written; the author has relied on ephemeral material such as minutes, annual reports, and memoranda to construct these sections. At the conclusion of these detailed descriptions, some issues and trends will be identified.

## FID AND IFLA

The two international associations with the most influence in the development of other international library associations are FID and IFLA. This article would not be complete without a summary of the history and influence of these "grandfather" associations.

### *FID*

FID, the Fédération Internationale de Documentation/International Federation for Documentation, was founded in 1895 as the Institut International de Bibliographie (IIB), concerning itself with the classification of materials and particularly the development of a standard classification scheme. Later, with the name change to FID, came a change in purpose, enlarged to include the "organization, storage, retrieval, dissemination and evaluation of information" (FID Preamble of Statutes, as quoted in Keenan, 1993, p. 377). In 1990, FID had a published membership of 371 library institutions from sixty-six countries and an additional 300 affiliated members. FID's Web site states its very general goals for the present and future:

1. advance the frontiers of science and technology;
2. improve competitiveness of business, industry, and national economies;
3. strengthen possibilities for development and enhance the quality of life wherever possible;
4. improve the ability of decision-makers to make appropriate decisions;
5. stimulate educational strategies and life-long learning;
6. make expression possible in all sectors of the Information Society including the arts and humanities and will strive and continue to be at the leading edge of the development of the management of information (FID WWW Document).<sup>1</sup>

### *IFLA*

The International Federation of Library Associations/Fédération Internationale des Associations de Bibliothécaires, renamed the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions in 1976, was founded in 1926 at the annual meeting of the American Library Association (ALA), where representatives from many countries had convened to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of ALA ( Fang & Songe, 1973). IFLA's early purpose was to organize regular world conferences between United States and European library associations. This mission was greatly expanded in the 1970s "to promote international understanding, cooperation, discussion, research, and development in all fields of library activity, including bibliography, information services, and the education of personnel, and to provide a body through which librarianship can be represented in matters of international interest" (IFLA 1976 Statutes, as quoted in Henry, 1993, p. 379). From its 1997 Web page, IFLA reasserts its global scope:

IFLA is a worldwide, independent organization created to provide librarians around the world with a forum for exchanging ideas, promoting international cooperation, research and development in all fields of library activity. IFLA's objectives are:

- to represent librarianship in matters of international interest,
- to promote the continuing education of library personnel,
- and to develop, maintain and promote guidelines for library services. (IFLA WWW Document)

IFLA continues to be an association of associations, with 1,200 members in 1990 in two categories—members representing associations and institutions and personal (nonvoting) members (Fang & Songe, 1990, p. 43). Today, IFLA reaches out to most of the world's regions, encouraging true worldwide participation at conferences and other IFLA-sponsored meetings.

## IATUL

According to its homepage on the World Wide Web, the International Association of Technological University Libraries is:

a voluntary international nongovernmental organisation of a group of libraries, represented by their library directors or university managers, who have responsibility for information services and resource management. It is small enough for individual members to be able to develop a close relationship, yet widespread enough to cover the interests of libraries operating in virtually all modern social, economic, and political situations. . . . (IATUL WWW Document)

The International Association of Technological University Libraries was founded in 1955 with institutional representatives from thirteen countries. Today's membership has grown to 198 member libraries from forty-one countries (Fjällbrant, 1993, p. 373). IATUL prefers that its members be directors of technological or scientific university libraries. In its founding year, IATUL became a section of IFLA. There are four categories of membership:

“ordinary membership,” available to libraries of academic institutions and research libraries where science and technology degrees at the doctoral level are offered;  
 “official observer membership,” available to libraries which do not have the doctoral program, but have research-level collections;  
 “sustaining membership,” for individuals and institutions who are sympathetic to the purposes of IATUL; and  
 “non-voting associate membership,” which is extended to libraries which confer science and technology degrees at the Masters level when no doctoral degrees are awarded. The last three categories require IATUL Board approval. (IATUL WWW Document)

IATUL's purpose is to “provide a forum for library directors to meet for exchange of views on matters of current significance in the libraries of universities of science and technology, and to provide an opportunity for them to develop a collaborative approach to problems” (Fang & Songe, 1990, p. 39). IATUL's goals focus on increasing opportunities for international cooperation in five areas: (1) sharing current information about technical university libraries; (2) recruiting and training library personnel; (3) discussing the development of new library buildings; (4) standardizing and enlarging international lending schemes; and (5) creating exchange opportunities of the publications of the respective institutions (Schmidmaier, 1990, p. 201).

IATUL takes pride in its ability to communicate with members through conferences, its publication program, and visibility on the World Wide Web (Tornudd, 1996). Conferences are currently held annually throughout the world. The last two were held in Enshede, The Netherlands, and Irvine, California, in 1996, in Trondheim, Norway, in 1997. The 1998 conference will convene in Pretoria, South Africa, a first for

the organization on the African continent. Themes for these and previous conferences have included user education, service to industry, resource management, networking, and implications for digital libraries. Conferences are lively opportunities to demonstrate and discuss new ideas for the advancement of library service in the members' constituencies. They are well attended with the 1996 conference (in Irvine, California) attracting approximately 250 attendees.

IATUL originally distributed reprints, then began publishing a small bulletin with news of the organization, especially its upcoming conferences. This "grey literature," defined by Dieter Schmidmaier, a former IATUL board member, as "publications outside of the bookshop, not bibliographically recorded and to a large extent unknown," nevertheless comprised the publication effort of IATUL for the first ten years of its existence (Schmidmaier, 1996, p. 330). Today, IATUL's publication program is strong. The *IATUL News* (formerly its *Quarterly*) and the *IATUL Proceedings* (of its conferences) are distributed to member libraries, although there is no one library which holds all publications of the organization.

In addition, IATUL has a presence on the World Wide Web. Its home page, at URL [educate.lib.chalmers.se/IATUL](http://educate.lib.chalmers.se/IATUL), contains information about the organization, upcoming meetings, institutional member linkages, projects, publications, membership information, and links to other relevant Web sites. In October 1996, forty countries had Web sites on the IATUL home page (IATUL WWW Document).

The future for IATUL encompasses some activities related to its length of time as an organization and its growth in size and global representation. These activities include developing an archive as a permanent record of IATUL's history, increasing the opportunities for personnel exchanges between the member institutions, essay prizes for papers presented at conferences, and exploring the idea of regional groups (Shaw, 1996). The statutes provide for the establishment of groups to organize member activities on a regional basis, and a North American Regional Group was established in 1985. Similar groups are under consideration for Australasia and South Africa (IATUL WWW Document). Cooperation with other international organizations continues. IATUL is an International Member of IFLA, an Official Observer of Unesco, and a member of the International Federation for Information and Documentation.

## IAALD

Like IATUL, the International Association of Agricultural Librarians and Documentalists was founded in 1955 with sixty founding members in thirteen countries. It clearly met a need, as one year later the membership had grown to thirty-five countries and then to fifty-three countries by 1960.

Founded by agriculture professors in Germany and Austria, this organization was a direct result of the chaos of World War II in Europe and called for renewed cooperation in the identification and exchange of scientific information. IAALD was established "to promote, internationally and nationally, agricultural library science and documentation, as well as professional interests of agricultural librarians and documentalists . . ." (Haendler & Powell, 1995, p. 68). Founders agreed to foster connections to IFLA, Unesco, and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Indeed, for the first five years of IAALD's existence, its secretariat was located at the FAO Library in Rome. Despite this association's strong European roots, the United States was an early active participant, and the first three presidents, serving five years each, were from the United States.

IAALD hosts an official World Congress once every five years. Members find that this is not enough, and additional regional meetings, symposia, and workshops reduce the average time between IAALD-sponsored events to 1.9 years (Haendler & Powell, 1996, p. 72). A regional meeting was held in Tucson, Arizona, in April 1996, as a joint conference with the U. S. Agricultural Information Network (USAIN). This is an example of a successful mid-conference meeting that has grown beyond "regional"—twenty Latin American members participated thanks to a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and delegates from Asia, South Asia, and Europe were present (USAIN/IAALD WWW Document). In all, the delegates to this conference encompassed 200 attendees from thirty-six countries.

IAALD has a robust publications program. The *IAALD Quarterly Bulletin*, *IAALD News*, and *IAALD Lettre d'Information* (in French) are its official serial publications, but it has supported many other publications, including the several editions of *Agricultural Information Resource Centers: A World Directory*, recently republished, which contains listings for 4,903 libraries and documentation centers from 171 countries.

IAALD's Web site is available at <[www.lib.montana.edu/~alijk/IAALD.html](http://www.lib.montana.edu/~alijk/IAALD.html)> (IAALD WWW Document). It contains IAALD's mission statement, membership information, upcoming events, and publications information. IAALD's constitution and chronological history are available in three languages (English, French, and Spanish). The latest edition of the *IAALD News* is available, full text, at the Web site.

## SLA

The Special Libraries Association defines itself in its latest Strategic Plan as "an international association of information professionals and special librarians in business, media, finance, science, research, government, academic institutions, museums, trade associations, nonprofit or-

ganizations, and institutions that use or produce specialized information" (Special Libraries Association, 1996a, p. 16). SLA was founded in 1909 by a group of twenty U. S. librarians, but early on incorporated Eastern Canadian business and industry librarians into its membership.

Today, SLA numbers just under 15,000 members from over sixty countries around the world. SLA's governance structure establishes an Association Office (its headquarters), with over thirty paid staff members, a Board of Directors (elected from the membership), and units called chapters, divisions, committees, and caucuses. Entities in all units have international interests. Chapters are geographic units and today represent librarians throughout the world: three Canadian chapters (Eastern Canada, Toronto, and Western Canada, founded 1932, 1940, and 1980, respectively); a European Chapter founded in 1972; the Arabian Gulf Chapter founded in 1993; the Florida and the Caribbean Chapter, 1969; and the Hawaiian-Pacific Chapter, including Japanese and Australian members, 1972. Other chapters, such as Texas, San Diego, and Arizona, count Mexican and other Latin American librarians among their members. SLA divisions relate to areas of interest actively represented among the membership.

Presently, recognizing the importance of international information, several divisions have incorporated international sections and programming into their activities, including the Business and Finance; Transportation; Telecommunications; Social Science; Education; Food, Agriculture, and Nutrition; and Information Technology Divisions. At the 1996 annual conference, fifteen programs specifically dealt with international topics.

The popular annual State-of-the Art Institutes have focused heavily on strategies for obtaining global information, with Latin America, the Pacific Rim, and Eastern Europe being recent regions featured at these programs.

Currently, planning is underway for the Second World Wide Conference on Special Libraries to be held in the year 2000 in Brighton, England. The purpose of this meeting, as SLA Executive Director David Bender (1996) expressed recently, "is to bring together special librarians and other industry leaders from around the world to cooperatively seek solutions to common problems and enhance the profession on a worldwide scale" (p. 17).

The Public Relations Committee created International Special Librarians Day to recognize the role of special librarians in the "global sharing of knowledge" (Bender, 1996, p. 18). Divisions, chapters, and individual members collaborate to commemorate this day in a variety of ways, from speakers to tours to outreach with companies or communities.

In addition to these activities, SLA sponsors one committee and one caucus specifically related to international issues. The International Relations Committee was established in 1989 to advise the Board of Directors and the membership on the following: (1) SLA's role in international library/information associations [FID and IFLA among others]; (2) international cooperation, exchange visits, and forums; (3) international understanding and knowledge of information issues; (4) participation in appropriate international conferences such as IFLA; (5) sharing information resources with foreign libraries having like interests; and (6) drafting position statements reflecting SLA's viewpoint on vital international information issues. SLA maintains official representation to FID and IFLA, and these delegates are ex-officio members on the International Relations Committee. *Special Libraries* focused on SLA's international role in a 1990 issue with position papers prepared by key SLA international librarians (Scheeder, 1990; Spaulding, 1990).

In addition, SLA holds an International Information Exchange Caucus. Authorized in January 1993, the caucus describes its function as:

A vehicle for SLA members who are involved or interested in efforts to promote networking on the international level through the exchange of ideas, information and/or people. Working in cooperation with the International Relations Committee, this Caucus provides the broadest possible opportunity for members to participate in and discuss international library information activities. (Special Libraries Association, 1996b, p. 56)

The publication program of SLA has also focused on the international needs of its members. That is, *Special Libraries* published abstracts in English, French, and Spanish. Membership brochures have also been written in those three languages. SLA units have established a total of forty-eight listservs for e-mail communication to connect geographically diverse members. The recent creation of World Wide Web sites for the association and for many units has helped mitigate the communication issues worldwide as well (SLA WWW Document).

Problems with which SLA must grapple as it continues its emphasis on internationalization include the following, which are not unique to SLA:

1. Speed of normal postal delivery and the costs of special international rates.
2. Language issues to communicate with members for whom English is not their language.
3. Relevance of North American-biased programming.
4. Availability and compatibility of computer software and hardware among its membership.

5. Varying levels of reliable telecommunication infrastructure.
6. Different methods of dealing with information transfer and library service from country to country ("Internationalization of the Special Libraries Association," 1992).

### AzLA ILRT

In 1988, the Arizona Library Association (AzLA), then the Arizona State Library Association (ASLA), approved the formation of a new round table concerned with international librarianship. Requested by a large group of Arizona librarians with international experience, its objective, spelled out in its bylaws, was to advance the cause of international librarianship and was called the International Librarianship Round Table.

The goals of ILRT, established at the first bylaws meeting, were to be: (1) to develop the interests of librarians and libraries in issues, activities, and opportunities in the field of international librarianship; (2) to promote the exchange of materials, information, librarians, and other resources throughout the world; and (3) to serve as a channel of communication and counsel for members of AzLA in the field of international librarianship.

ILRT's first membership listing in the *Arizona State Library Association Directory* listed twenty-eight individual members from an association membership of about 1,200 (Arizona State Library Association, 1988). In its first year of activities, ILRT grew to seventy members; membership has fluctuated between seventy and ninety members throughout its existence. The publication program of ILRT is ephemeral: one renegade newsletter published outside the auspices of the parent organization, then fairly regular columns in the *ASLA Newsletter*. ILRT occasionally receives wider exposure through the publications and presentations of its members (such as this one). The AzLA Web site enhances its existence (AzLA WWW Document). The programs and activities of ILRT establish it as one of the most active groups in AzLA. Every annual conference and mid-year conference of the association offers several programs of international significance, such as reports of exchanges and other international professional experiences of librarians. The mid-year conference (MIDCON) in 1990 featured a panel of three Arizona librarians speaking of their experiences on three continents. Speakers from other countries, such as Ana Maria Magalone, director of public libraries in Mexico, draw interest from the larger AzLA membership.

Why has ILRT been such a success? One reason is that this group, at the state association level, fills an immediate and accessible need for librarians who are not directors of libraries or the official representatives to larger organizations or for whom travel to expensive international locations for meetings is beyond their budget or the travel budgets of their organizations.

Another reason for its success is that it is a trailblazer for state associations. ILRT established some precedents. It may have marked the first time a state association established a formal international librarianship subdivision, though the California Library Association recently established an International Relations Round Table (IRRT) similar to the IRRT of the American Library Association (ALA). ILRT was the first group to monitor an international travel/exchange endowment program at the state level. Third, it recommended the establishment of an international conference separate from the association's annual conference. That resulted in the Transborder Library Forum discussed below.

In addition, Arizona, as a state bordering another country, employs librarians in all types of libraries who see an immediate need to learn about the extensive resources and common interests of Mexico, especially the border states of Mexico. Arizona librarians have extensive experience in international situations all over the world, and this core of leadership sets the tone for the round table. Finally, the projects proposed by ILRT become reality. Projects include library exchanges between Arizona and Mexican librarians for education and training; the creation of its own subgroup, the Arizona-Mexico Committee, whose purposes were to report to Arizona members on the work of the Arizona-Mexico Commission, a statewide (nonlibrarian) initiative; to report on Arizona's participation at the Guadalajara Book Fair; and to begin the organization of the Binational Conference which became the Transborder Library Forum, now organizing its eighth conference.

Finally, ILRT became the administering body for the Horner Japanese Exchange Fellowship Award from an endowment established by Dr. and Mrs. Layton (Jack) Horner, Arizona residents who lived for many post-World War II years in Japan. This fund was initiated with the Arizona State Library Association in 1988 to promote professional cooperation and international understanding through an exchange program between Arizona and Japanese librarians. The fellowship from the endowment is unique among state library associations in the United States and is still active. Several Arizona librarians have visited Japan, primarily the Osaka area, and on at least three occasions Japanese librarians have officially visited Arizona (AzLA WWW Document).

ILRT remains strong. Its 1996 annual report, published at the AzLA Web site, indicates a membership of eighty-nine, four programs during the year, and four additional programs at the 1996 Annual Conference (AzLA WWW Document).

## FORO

The Transborder Library Forum/Foro Transfronterizo de Bibliotecas developed because of the Arizona Library Association's growing international librarianship interests in the 1980s and because Sonoran librar-

ians were available and interested in engaging in binational networking. The group of meetings is referred to collectively as the foro, which is Spanish for "forum." It was established as a forum, rather than a conference, because of ASLA's reluctance to provide sponsorship for a gathering which could be seen to compete with its annual conference.

The Foro was conceived by a group of fifteen librarians from Arizona and Mexico who gathered at the 1989 ASLA Annual Conference in Tucson. That conference was exceptional because the participation of fifty-seven Mexican librarians brought a fresh new perspective on Arizona librarianship, and attendees expressed a need to continue the contact. The leadership of the International Librarianship Round Table became the logical pool for Arizona organizers, but the Special Libraries Association Arizona Chapter and the members of the ASLA Spanish Speaking Round Table quickly joined in. In Sonora, Jalisco, and Baja, California, librarians expressed interest in helping organize another opportunity to bring together these two countries' librarians. It took eighteen months for the first Foro to occur, but that early planning set the stage for future successes. For example, program planning topics were selected by librarians in both countries by means of a questionnaire. Planning meetings, called "encuentros," were held in Mexico and on the Arizona border. Bilingual keynote speakers and dual facilitators in the breakout sessions were essential. The first Foro, held in Rio Rico, Arizona (near Nogales) in 1991, was a huge success and, at the closing banquet, the librarians from Sonora invited the group to attend a second Foro the following year in Hermosillo. This invitation set the stage for alternating meetings in Mexico and the United States with the exception of the fourth and fifth Foros which were both held in Mexico. The following is a brief listing of the history of the Transborder Library Forum:

*Foro I. February 1991.* The first Transborder Library Forum took place in Rio Rico, Arizona, when 130 information specialists from the United States and Mexico met to establish interlibrary cooperation. The meeting was typified by keynote speakers and discussion groups called "Talk Tables." Cultural, political, and language barriers were challenges to overcome in order to create professional and personal relationships between librarians of both countries. This was accomplished in large part by three factors: the presence of simultaneous translators, the high percentage of bilingual attendees, and everyone's strong desire to make the conference succeed (Foro Binacional, 1992).

*Foro II. March 1992.* The second forum was held in Hermosillo, Sonora (Mexico) with the attendance of 200 librarians from the United States and Mexico, who met to continue to work on recommendations set at the prior forum. Relations, both professional and personal, were strengthened

and information on library issues shared through the same format of keynote speakers and Talk Tables (Foro Binacional . . .II, 1993).

*Foro III. February 1993.* The third transborder forum was held in El Paso, Texas. Important advancements were achieved toward greater representation by librarians in all types of libraries and by programs in areas of interest to all attendees. A creative binational document delivery system coordinated by librarians from the University of Texas, El Paso, and the Benjamin Franklin Library in Mexico City was one of the exciting developments announced at this forum.

*Foro IV. February 1994.* The Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores (ITESM) hosted the fourth forum in Monterrey, Mexico. Participation was extended to Canadian librarians for the first time. The importance of the NAFTA treaty to the three countries was illustrated by the transformation of the Transborder (binational) Library Forum to a Trinational Forum, and most programs featured speakers and resource persons from all three countries (Foro Trinacional...IV, 1995).

*Foro V. February 1995.* The fifth forum, hosted by ITESM's Mexico City Campus, explored a variety of opportunities and problems facing librarians in relation to the NAFTA treaty. Keynote speakers and discussion group facilitators represented all three countries and delved into ways to promote informational and personnel exchanges (Foro Trinacional...V, 1996).

*Foro VI. February 1996.* With a return to Arizona, the sixth transborder forum, hosted a second time by the Arizona Library Association, brought the forum full circle. The goal of Foro VI was to increase the numbers of programs and topics of interest to academic, public, school, and special librarians in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Attendance broke 300 for the first time; nevertheless, Canadian attendance remained very low and the Canadian component was abandoned for Foro VII.

*Foro VII. February 1997.* Foro VII, held in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico, reaffirmed many of the goals of earlier Foros. Describing the Foro as the venue for exchanging ideas, experiences, and efforts related to border issues, binational or trinational, the organizers sought to meet the following objectives: (1) to strengthen library linkages among librarians interested in "building information bridges" (the theme of Foro VII) along international borders; (2) to discuss cooperation schemes beyond library borders; (3) to provide opportunities for networking; (4) to become a forum where library resources are shared; and (5) to understand the friendly way of living on the U. S./Mexican border (*Foro Information Handbook*, 1996, p. 6).

The Transborder Library Forums are unique in the library world. Held every year since 1991, these events are organized without benefit of

a secretariat, an association umbrella, dues, or elected officers. Each forum is administered by a different volunteer group of librarians whose motivation is increased library contact between the two countries. The highlight of all of the Transborder Library Forums has been the networking opportunities between the border librarians of the two countries. Informal exchanges, internship opportunities, and materials exchanges are frequent topics of discussion, and everyone works on language proficiency.

Communication about the Foro is enhanced by the existence of a listserv, FORO-L.<sup>2</sup> Printed proceedings of the first conferences were prepared for attendees. Selected proceedings of the sixth Foro, held in Tucson in 1996, are available on the WWW (Foro VI WWW Document). Plans to make the proceedings of the seventh Foro (Juarez, Mexico, February 1997) available in this manner are pending. The sixth, seventh, and eighth Foros (the last planned for Riverside, California, in March 1998) all have Web sites. Consistent with the grassroots and noncentralized nature of the forum, however, each is at a different site with a different Webmaster and format (see references for URLs at the end of this article). Links are being developed to unite them.

The future of the Foro relates to its "growing pains." Attendance at the annual meetings is now consistently 300, three times the size of the first few meetings. This size requires more programming, more logistics, as well as more fund-raising to subsidize expenses because the Foro is operated on a cost-recovery basis. Further, Transborder Library Forum members are now working to establish a statement of mission and objectives that reflects its continued growth and relevance to long-standing, as well as to new, participants. Program planning documents, including budget information, the exhibitor and sponsor pool, and tips for success are handed down from one planner to another.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, these five associations (IATUL, IAALD, SLA, AzLA ILRT, and the Foro) typify the common activities and goals of international library associations:

- To expedite agreements for the loan, exchange, or transfer of materials between countries.
- To promote agreements which facilitate the commerce of information, such as cooperative copyright agreements, and postal regulations and rates.
- To create standards for the recording of bibliographic data to ensure greater use of library catalogs between libraries and countries.
- To develop information systems that facilitate transfer of information or data.

- To share information between countries on new ways of doing things in the library.
- To publish materials that are of international interest.
- To work to unite librarians in geographically dispersed areas.
- To establish an effective means to recruit and train library personnel in the international marketplace or for dealing with international information.
- To compare functions and design of new library buildings.
- To identify opportunities for personnel exchanges.

All the international library associations under discussion in this article face issues which require resolution. Some of these include:

1. The appropriate payment of dues relevant to the members' ability to pay for services and the value of those services to all members.
2. Planning programs that meet the needs of all member constituencies and how to identify and satisfy those needs.
3. The ability to maintain continuity from year to year with no secretariat at all, such as the Foro, or no permanent secretariat, like IATUL.
4. The ability to disseminate and archive the published and nonpublished records of the association. No one library has a whole set of IATUL publications, for example, and the information regarding the founding of ILRT and the Foro as described in this article is based in large part on the professional experiences of the author.
5. The development of a mission and vision which is broad enough for flexibility and change but exact enough to distinguish one association from another in the constant quest for new members.
6. Ascertaining ways to detail accomplishments. Questions such as: "Must accomplishments be measurable and identifiable in order to be evaluated?" are related to continued support for the maintenance of the association. For example, are developing friendships and professional networking opportunities without any additional results enough to justify existence?
7. To establish the limit to the geographic coverage of the association. Some of SLA's U. S. members have expressed concern that service to a growing international membership will decrease or dilute services to them. Some Sonoran and Arizona librarians have felt that expansion of the Foro to "trinational" status, the experiment in 1994-1996 to include Canadian border and generic North American issues, diluted the scope and relevance of the meetings for them. IFLA and IATUL were U. S./European organizations in their early years but have developed to embrace a truly global membership, making it more difficult for everyone to remain active.
8. To communicate appropriately with their members. To deliver infor-

mation both physically and in a language that is understandable to members—e.g., SLA translates the abstracts of articles in *Special Libraries*, and now *Information Outlook*, its membership brochure, and other key communications. The *World Guide* lists as a trend the increased number of official journals through the three editions of the work, but how many members of a global association can read the official language of their association?

9. Use of the World Wide Web and e-mail to unite geographically diverse members or those for whom traditional infrastructure methods of communication are more difficult: telecommunications, telephone service, language issues, and long delays with postal service.
10. The relevance of affiliations with other organizations. All of these featured associations affiliate with other associations. They continue this practice, but what meaningful member-level services are derived from those affiliations and at what cost?

Katherine Cveljo (1996), professor emerita at the University of North Texas, Denton, has summed up the relevance of international library associations:

Viewing the information profession globally as the predominant profession of the future, it is important to emphasize that at no point in history has there been such a high level of understanding about the importance of global interdependence and the need to establish and maintain strong and harmonious international relations. . . . It is logical to conclude that only dynamic, forward-looking and globally-oriented information professionals, aided by up-to-the-minute information generated both nationally and globally, can provide quality service in the realm of continuously changing specialized information needs. . . . (p. 17)

All the successes of the international library associations described in this article suggest the key reasons behind their growth and continued existence—i.e., that within these organizational entities rests the opportunity for librarians to network, to explore new ways of organizing and disseminating information, to make their work more relevant for their clientele, and to feel connected to other information professionals who, throughout the world, are in the same position.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>URLs are available for every association mentioned in this paper. See the References section at the end of the article for full Web citations. Each WWW Document is alphabetized by the acronym of the association.

<sup>2</sup>Subscribe at [listserv@listserv.arizona.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.arizona.edu). Send message: Subscribe Foro-L First name Last name.

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The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is the leading international body representing the interests of people who rely on libraries and information professionals. An independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit organization, IFLA was founded in Scotland in 1927 and maintains headquarters at the National Library of the Netherlands in The Hague. IFLA sponsors the annual IFLA World Library and Information Congress, promoting universal and equitable access to