



# Approaching a Century of Leadership

IFLA's journey from a 1920s “gentlemen’s club” to the 21<sup>st</sup> century “global voice of libraries”

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Disclaimer

# A Gentlemen's Club





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# The intellectual environment

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- Development of Transnational Civil Society
- Thomas Davies (2014): Three phases
  - c.1860 to 1918 (end of WW1)
  - 1919 to 1945 (end of WW2)
  - 1945 to present
- IFLA founded in 1927, second phase
- What came before?





## *La Belle Époque* (c.1880-1914):

Advances in arts,  
literature, science,  
and industrial  
technology

“Modern” transport  
facilitated  
international travel.

Image: Wikimedia:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gare\\_Saint-Lazare\\_\(Monet\\_series\)#/media/File:Claude\\_Monet,\\_The\\_Gare\\_Saint-Lazare,\\_1877.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gare_Saint-Lazare_(Monet_series)#/media/File:Claude_Monet,_The_Gare_Saint-Lazare,_1877.jpg)



# Can you read this?

“Tiu ĉi frazo estas en Esperanto, konstrua (t.e. artefarita) internacia helpa (Konstruita) lingvo kreita de L.L. Zamenhof en 1887, celita kiel universala dua lingvo por internacia komunikado.”

Belle Époque:  
Communicating for peace  
and progress

- Idealistic internationalism
- International languages
- Peace movements. Treaties
- Rapid growth of science & technology
- “Information overload” – attempts at bibliographic control
- Phenomenal growth of libraries



# Universal Expositions and International Congresses

- 1876 Founding of American Library Association at **Centennial Exposition** (*annus mirabilis*)
- 1877 First International Conference of Librarians, London
- 1892 Second, Paris. At **Exposition Universelle**
- 1893 -1926 Nine library conferences, in various cities.
- Some with archivists, antiquarians, booklovers
- Often in conjunction with an international exposition

Poster advertising the Brussels International Exposition, 1897

Image: Wikimedia,

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7675391>



# The ugly face of “international”: WW1, 1914-1918



Aftermath of the battle of Delville Wood,  
France, July 1916

Image: <https://delvillewoodtrust.org.za/>

# Never again...

1920: League of Nations set up at Versailles Peace Conference

1922: International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC)

1922: Subcommittee on Bibliography & libraries

The League of Nations' *Palais des Nations* under construction in Geneva





# Who claims credit for founding IFLA?

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- 1926: Proposal by Gabriel Henriot (**France**)
- at the International Library Congress in Prague, **Czechoslovakia**
- 1926: Matter pursued at the 1926 ALA Conference in Philadelphia, **USA**
- 1927: At the Library Association Conference in **Scotland** a motion was adopted to set up the “**International Library and Bibliographical Committee**”
- 1929: At the **World Congress of Libraries and Bibliography** in **Italy** a federal structure and set of Statutes were adopted and the name **IFLA** was finalized



# Founding Resolution of the “International Library and Bibliographical Committee”, 20 September 1927, Edinburgh, Scotland

The word “Bibliographical” was dropped at  
insistence of the ICIC

## INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL COMMITTEE.

We, the undersigned representatives of National Library Associations, in conference at Edinburgh, 20th Sept. 1927, adopt the following resolution with the understanding that neither this action nor any action which may hereafter be taken by the Committee shall be binding on any national library association until ratified by the Association.

1. Resolved that we hereby establish the International Library and Bibliographical Committee.
2. The Committee shall consist of members selected by the national library associations which ratify this action. There shall be from each country only one designated member with the right to vote, but with him may be associated adjoint delegates.
3. The duties of the Committee shall be to select the time and place for international library conferences and, with the co-operation of local committees, to prepare programs for such conferences; and to make investigations and recommendations concerning international relations between libraries, organizations of librarians and bibliographers, and other agencies.
4. International library conferences shall be held at least once in five years. The first conference to be convened by this Committee shall be held in 1929 or 1930. Plenary sessions of the Committee must be held in connection with each international library conference. Other sessions may be held at the call of the Chairman and must be held when requested by one-third of the Committee. The first plenary session of the Committee shall be held within one year from this date.

# Signatories of the Resolution

21 delegates

15 library associations

15 countries

One **lady**

One non-Western country

Austria

Belgium

Canada

**China**

Czechoslovakia

Denmark

France

Germany

Great Britain

Italy

Netherlands

Norway

Sweden

Switzerland

United States

Signed by

Austria

Belgium

Canada

China

Czechoslovakia

Denmark

France

Germany

Great Britain

Holland

Italy

Norway

Sweden

Switzerland

United States

Dr. Uhlendahl

Frans van Kelken

George H. Locke

*Miss Wood*

Zdenek Vaclav Tobolka

Oskar Thyregod

Henri Lenaitre

Dr. Uhlendahl

L. Stanley Jast

D. de Clereq

A. Hulshof

Vincenzo Fago

Wilhelm Munthe

Isak Collign

Hermann Escher

C. B. Roden

Charles F. D. Beldon

George D. Utley

Frank P. Hill

H. H. B. Meyer

Carl H. Milam



## STATUTES.

Sec. 1. The name of this organisation shall be the International Federation of Library Associations.

Sec. 2. The object of the Federation shall be to promote international library cooperation.

Sec. 3. Members of the Federation shall be those Library Associations of national (or wider) scope which approve these resolutions and which comply with such other provisions as are adopted from time to time.

Sec. 4. The affairs of the Federation shall be administered by the International Library Committee; this committee shall consist of representatives selected by associations which are members of the Federation. There shall be from each country only one designated member or substitute with the right to vote. But with him may be associated delegates. Delegates are elected for a period not exceeding 5 years but are eligible for reelection.

Sec. 5. The duties of the Committee shall be to select the time and place for international library conferences and with the cooperation of local committees to prepare programs for such conferences; and to make investigations and recommendations concerning international relations between libraries, organizations of librarians and bibliographers and other agencies.

Sec. 6. International library conferences shall be held at least once in five years. Plenary sessions of the Committee must be held in connection with each international library conference. Other sessions may be held at the call of the Chairman and must be held when requested by one third of the Committee.

Sec. 7. The Committee shall have power to appoint sub-committees from its own membership or from the membership of any of the cooperating library associations.

Sec. 8. The officers of the Federation and of the Committee shall be a President, two Vice Presidents and a Secretary. These officers shall constitute the executive board and shall be elected by the committee for a term to expire not later than twelve months after the close of each congress. The Secretary may be, but need not be, a member of the Committee designated by some national association. He shall have the right to vote.

Vacancies on the Executive Committee shall be filled by the Committee.

Sec. 9. Annual dues for each member Association shall be fixed at a rate between 25 and fifty centimes (Swiss) for each member of that association or on a basis of 5 or 10% of the receipts from membership dues of the associations, but shall not be more than 2,500 francs (Swiss) for any association. Dues shall be payable to the Secretary on or before March 1 for each calendar year.

The amount of the dues will form the budget of the Association.

Sec. 10. Any association may withdraw from the Federation if its dues for that year have been paid.

Sec. 11. By-laws may be adopted by the Committee.

Sec. 12. Resolutions adopted by the Committee or by any Congress held under its auspices shall not be binding on any member association until ratified by that association.

~~Florence~~, 25 June 1929.

Venice 29

# First IFLA Statutes

Adopted in Venice, 1929  
(One page)



Delegates received in an audience by Pope Pius XI  
Photo: IFLA (Guerrini & Speciale 2012)





# IFLA's Gradual evolution

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- The International Library Committee (ILC)
- IFLA's executive. Met annually
- International conference every 5 years
- IFLA generally known as the International Library Committee
- International congresses faded into the background
- Larger ILC meetings → IFLA conferences

FÉDÉRATION  
INTERNATIONALE  
DES ASSOCIATIONS DE  
BIBLIOTHÉCAIRES

CONFÉRENCE DE STOCKHOLM  
20-21 AOÛT 1930



DINER  
AU GRAND RESTAURANT DE L'EXPOSITION  
LE MERCREDI 20 AOÛT

# The “Gentlemen”

Well fed, privileged international travellers  
Nucleus of international leaders  
Well connected, in ICIC committees  
Got things done

Formal dinner at Stockholm ILC session, 1930 (Photo: IFLA)



# The League of Nations Connection



The International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation  
Installed in the Palais Royal, Paris, in 1926  
Image: Wikipedia





# Les Actes/Proceedings

- Annual meetings of ILC (IFLA)
- Proceedings printed & published
- Substantial content:
  - List of delegates
  - Group photo
  - Opening address
  - Communications
  - Subcommittee reports
  - Country reports
- Sharing professional knowledge

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS DE BIBLIOTHÉCAIRES  
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS  
INTERNATIONALER VERBAND DER BIBLIOTHEKAR-VEREINE  
FEDERAZIONE INTERNAZIONALE DELLE ASSOCIAZIONI DEI BIBLIOTECARI

## COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL DES BIBLIOTHÈQUES

4<sup>me</sup> Session

CHELTENHAM (Angleterre)

29-31 Août 1931

## A C T E S

GENÈVE  
IMPRIMERIE ALBERT KUNDIG  
1931



# What the “gentlemen” achieved

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- IFLA gradually became an organized INGO
- Programme of professional action (not merely a series of conferences)
- Annual meetings, set up committees, regular reporting
- Represented the library field Internationally
- Collaborative projects with the ICIC/IIC i.a. on standardization issues
- Significant sharing of professional knowledge



# What happened to IFLA during WW2?

- IFLA did **not** “disband”.
- ILC could not meet
- Sevensma under Nazi occupation
- President Godet and Assistant Secretary Breycha-Vauthier in neutral Switzerland
- IFLA Secretariat kept operating
- Active in international committees to aid prisoners of war



# End of Part 1



مكتبة قطر الوطنية  
Qatar National Library

