

Information Technology Section – Annual report 2008/2009

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The Information Technology Section, one of the most representative sections of IFLA, focusses its work on the identification and placement of innovative developments and emerging trends with a high potential for the future for libraries and other cultural heritage institutions. In this sense the section is - often in collaboration with other, more thematically-oriented library sections - becoming active in a supporting way and addresses relevant issues in this context. In general, the document "Strategic Plan" informs about the strategy of the Section¹. The actual 'work' of the section is being guaranteed by the Standing Committee, a panel of 20 elected members and other corresponding members. Through the revolving upcoming elections in 2009, nine members came new from just as many, mainly European countries to the Standing Committee. The Officers of the Section are again taken on the elections and have been confirmed for another term in office.

Again this year, the newsletter of the Section has been named one of the best among all IFLA Sectional newsletters; the repetition of this success shows that all efforts for this only online distributed publication are worth it; the increasing requests for the use of the platform and the growing number of suggestions and questions demonstrate the growing acceptance. The newsletter is being published regularly on the IFLANET². The high acceptance of the Section activities is also confirmed by a study conducted by Kayvan Kousha and Mahshid Aboli (Iran), who showed according to a detailed citation analyzes of IFLA conference papers that within a total time of 4 years in about 3 years the papers of the IT section have been cited the most. In the overall balance of all IFLA publications the papers of the IT section are in 3rd place (after the papers of the

¹ <http://www.ifla.org/en/publications/strategic-plan-28>

² <http://www.ifla.org/en/publications/information-technology-section-newsletters>

Cataloging Section and the Classification and Indexing Section)³ and that within an organisation that is still quite focussed on librarian-oriented topics.

Other activities in the section were related to the positioning of the IFLA towards the EU initiative for the protection of privacy in connection with the use of RFID. A position paper for IFLA has been prepared and has been available for some time to the Governing Board for decision and approval respectively. Further cooperation and working fields of the section are related to the IFLA Guidelines for digital libraries and with regard to the preparation and the content of upcoming conferences and events.

Work programme of the Section

The working meeting of the Panel at the beginning and the end of the conference are conducted as public meetings and a number of colleagues took advantage also this year of the opportunity to learn at first hand about the work and topics of the section and to contribute own ideas to the discussion vice versa. The surprisingly good visit by external visitors demonstrated once again the immense interest and relevance respectively of the information technology for the library world.

The Standing Committee has decided for the new strategic plan to define the priorities of the general programmatic work of the Section even more accurate. It was decided for the near future to operate more with standing topics themes and to deepen them in specific working groups. The following topics will be taken up by the section and will be anchored in the next Strategic Plan:

Support of libraries in the use of Open Source Software (OSS)

(particularly for library systems preferably in non-developed countries)

The Standing Committee will come up to the clearly articulated need for immediate assistance on the one hand by intensifying cooperation with relevant initiatives (KOHA Foundation, support of the Greenstone digital library initiative) and on the other hand by continuing the work with eIFL. Well-directed special activities such as supporting and implementing a workshop of the Section Parliament libraries on "Leveraging Technology for Parliamentary Libraries and

³ <http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/papers/ifla75/105-kousha-en.pdf>

Research Services" in Rome on August 18, 2009 with a comprehensive practice-oriented block regarding the use of OSS will be intensified. A similar direction covers the consulting and cooperation of the IFLA President's initiative to conclude a strategic partnership with ICT4D. Further plans of the respective task forces within the Committee are related to the encouragement and circulation of "standards" for OSS in libraries and the publication of an OSS Frameworks for libraries. A reference framework like this in the sense of a comprehensive enterprise-version of OSS for libraries is one opportunity to increase the acceptance of OSS for libraries and is complemented by a web-service with comparative information about systems and architectural recommendations. In addition, in collaboration with partners regional initiatives for the introduction of OSS shall be supported and finally examples of projects that use OSS shall be recommended and published. The idea of establishing a Special Interest Group within the Section will not be pursued further, however, after the first approach failed to do so.

Digital Preservation

This topic has been taken up in the past repeatedly by the Section, often in cooperation with other sections. Because it is apparent that the priorities of other sections are closer to the physical materials, the Information Technology Section will proactively strengthen this focus. Beyond the mere Technology-Watch the installation of stable operating schedules within the cultural heritage institutions and their integration into the overall working flows of a library plays its role in the perception of the Technology section group: After years of system development in often relatively isolated active projects now the question arises regarding a broad anchoring of Digital Preservation into the business/working processes of the "librarian" organisation. In addition to the program work for the annual IFLA conferences more activities will occur in the future which serve mainly the better mutual information and the intensification of cooperation.

Semantic Web and Libraries

Already visible in the implementation of a satellite conference in that environment (see below), the section looks at this issue as a key issue with high future potential. The integration of the data properties of libraries in the context of the Semantic Web offers new possibilities of distribution and replication of

information, strengthens the visibility of libraries, especially in the context of science and research and provides unhindered access and emancipated use of the information resources of the Web. In addition, new opportunities open up for the (re) use of data and the available connection and inference information included in that data.

Among the fields of activity there are:

- Co-operation in data modeling and the design of URIs
- Coordinated software evaluation and benchmarking for triple stores
- Collection, preparation, presentation of success stories
- Aligned action regarding the problem of trustworthiness of data
- Aligned line regarding questions of licensing policy

Concrete measures are related to the propagation of the issue on Technology Watch and project lists as well as to the collection of best-practice examples and the derivation of guidelines. In addition, the group will take up activities to increase the presence in the W3C standardization.

Infrastructure and process management in libraries

Due to increasing demands on the digital services of libraries, there are growing demands on the efficiency of their information technology infrastructure. These requirements increasingly bundle resources and require a professionalization of the corresponding service facilities. Besides technical concepts of the architecture of data centers there are issues concerning organizational and process development, furthermore there are issues in the context of outsourcing, contract management, etc. - issues that are the result of demands by some members of the Standing Committee and form an own strand of activity. The focus of possible activities lies on the exchange of experiences.

Web 2.0 and Libraries (Special Interest Group)

The Discussion Group already existing since 2007 has been successfully transferred into a Special Interest Group. The congress in Milan was used to identify new topics and to emphasize planning for the next Congress in Gothenburg. Emphasis then will be mobile computing and potentials arising from

the developments in particular by the geolocation and the devices integrated multimedia features.

Events and activities of the section in the environment of the Congress

After many years, the Section organized in cooperation with the Special Interest Group, Libraries and Web 2.0 this year a satellite conference again. Locally supported by the Fondazione Rinascimento Digitale and under the title "Emerging trends in technology: libraries between Web 2.0, semantic web and search technology", about 100 participants gathered on 19 and 20 August 2009 to discuss current technological trends in the environment of libraries with a particular focus on current strategies for providing data on the Semantic Web⁴. A mixture of more fundamental and introductory lectures here and presentations/contributions with concrete examples and best-practice reports offered numerous opportunities for discussion and continuative considerations. It became exceedingly clear that a key strategic aspect for the visibility of libraries on the Web will be their willingness to offer their data and in particular, also the standard data in the syntax of the Semantic Web as open source. Furthermore, there will be generic services which allow the integration of library services into other environments and vice versa also allow the use of external services such as information portals for personalization. Practical examples and further consideration illuminated these findings from different sides. But, also the presence of libraries in the social web, the active use of new communication interfaces and the offer of new integrated services – highlighted by practical examples – has been worked out as an important quality characteristics of library services.

The conference was also reflected in the community web, it has been blogged and twittered – that was in a way practical use and implementation of new collaborative forms of working, which themselves were once again the subject of the conference⁵.

The IFLA congress itself was shaped by a total of four events, partly in cooperation with other sections performed events.

Together with the sections "Statistics and Evaluation" and "Preservation and

⁴ Conference-Website: <http://www.ifla2009satellitelflorence.it/meeting3/program/program.html>, all papers and slides will be available soon.

Conservation" an event / presentation on "Information Technology and: Statistics for the cultural heritage" was carried out. The palette ranged from first still approaching considerations on key indicators for the decision-making of retaining or restoration measures (I. Schafer: Statistics in preservation as a basis for positive action) via the integration of user proposals for digitization decisions (J. Foster: Statistics tools for the evaluation of preservation needs) up to the attempt to determine possible indicators for the quality of web-harvesting activities (E. Berms: Heritage Web Metrics and strategies for management and preservation). But even basic methods of collecting data and standards have been identified and partly exhaustively analyzed (e.g. from R. Poll: The NUMERIC: statistics for the digitization of the European cultural heritage, or rather in a general approach in the museum context (A. Ermert / M. Hagedorn -- Saupe: Museum statistics data in USA and Europe)⁶.

"Social computing tools for learning and knowledge sharing" - under this title the sections "Knowledge Management, Library and Research Services for Parliaments and Information Technology" attempted to present an overview on current usage scenarios of community tools. On the one hand, from a principle IT perspective in an overview F. Cervone to "community tools" and in his second contribution to the utilization of such tools ("adoption rates"), on the other hand from a practical perspective with examples from Chile (S. Ferreiro and J. Muga: Connecting with Citizens Congress), South Africa (P. Langner: Encouraging Learning & Knowledge Sharing) and the Netherlands (K. Selhorst: Improving Customer Service) and the U.S.. That for all the euphoria around the community tools only very practical activation and stimulating workshops really motivate employees in libraries has been put into contrast by M. Fraser (Engaging Communities & Sharing Knowledge)⁷.

Within the – limited only to one hour - "Library 2.0 Project Showroom" - the Libraries and the Web 2.0 Special Interest Group opened the view towards current projects and provided an opportunity for questioning and discussion. The extremely well-attended event suffered somewhat under the geographic situation

⁵ See archived tweets of the #ifla2009it at Twatterkeeper, Blogs (way of example): <http://log.netbib.de/archives/author/ac/> und bei www.figoblog.org

⁶ Comparisons to the program and to the contributions directly linked there <http://www.ifla.org/annual-conference/ifla75/programme2009-en.php#monday> (here number 92).

⁷ Vgl. <http://www.ifla.org/annual-conference/ifla75/programme2009-en.php#tuesday> (here number 120).

and the very different expectations of the visitors, but was all the more spontaneous and more stimulating for discussions.

Although taking place on the "unthankful" Thursday morning, the final event was surprisingly well attended (though visibly technically oriented), and explored architectures and innovative approaches in cross-domain approaches with a certain emphasis on Persistent identifier services under the title "New repositories: architectures interoperability and data exchange". Here it was obvious that the Europeana project has a special meaning (C. Lupovici: Not (just) a repository, nor (just) a Digital Library, nor (just) a portal: A Portrait of Europeana as an API) was on hand, surprising and worth of closer analysis, however, the conceptual analysis of modules from the EU project Axmedis (P. Nesi: A Trust P2P network for access to the Open Archive resources) to create an open access repository. The event has been rounded by a contribution to the Italian re-implementing an URN-resolving service (R. Puccinelli: persistent identifier system for distributed digital libraries). As the fourth speaker had to cancel at short notice, E. Balnaves (IT Sector) took the opportunity to present some basic considerations on system architecture for use of OSS⁸.

Not to be forgotten there is another activity of the Standing Committee that caused quite an (attention) stir: A resolution of the section demanding WLAN free of charge for congress participants – with regard to the ILFA self-expectation and the virtual external participants who only can participate through Internet-based communication channels such as Twitter – resulted in a lively discussion. But not only that: WLAN finally was released and one can be quite sure that this requirement will have its permanent place in future congress negotiations.

Prospects for further (program) planning, Gothenburg 2010

The plannings of the section have been well rocked by the short-term change of the venue: a pre-conference planned with local partners in Australia on the topic "Indigenous culture", focusing on the digital collection and security of this special heritage, legal issues and on reasonable access to these data in a distributed architecture had to be canceled. Being considered are:

⁸ compare. <http://www.ifla.org/annual-conference/ifla75/programme2009-en.php#thursday> (here number 193); information about: **hier fehlt was, aber auch schon in der deutschen Version!**

- An introductory workshop for libraries in the relevant enabling technologies for the Semantic Web (training session)
- A special event as training for the introduction of OSS systems, possibly as a train-the-trainer workshop
- An event for process management and process integration of long-term archiving processes in libraries
- A demonstration event / session of Semantic Web projects in libraries
- A presentation by the SIG on Mobile Devices and their use potential.