



**The Chronology of my Chronology: A History of  
85 Years IFLA: A History and Chronology of Sessions,  
1927-2012**

Adapted from *85 Years IFLA: A History and Chronology of Sessions, 1927-2012* (De Gruyter Saur, 2012)

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**Abstract :**

*Through a chance meeting with an influential IFLA member at the beginning of my career, I found a mentor and my life and research trajectory changed forever, with a distinct tilt toward IFLA. While working on my book, “A Chronology of Librarianship” (Scarecrow Press, 2009), I realized there was not a fully-developed history of IFLA. This led me to complete A “Chronology of IFLA Sessions, 1927-2009”, which was published to the IFLA webpage in 2011. This then led me to complete “85 Years IFLA: A History and Chronology of Sessions, 1927-2012”, which was published by De Gruyter Saur as “IFLA Publication Series” 155 in summer 2012, as the commemorative volume for IFLA’s 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary. But none of this would have been possible I had not been mentored, an aspect of the profession that certainly cannot be replaced by the internet.*

**Introduction**

It all began, as it always has, with Laverne. I met Dr. Frances Laverne Carroll in 1995 at our home institution of the University of Oklahoma (OU), Norman, Oklahoma, US. She was a 70 year old Faculty Emerita who had taught at the OU Library School since 1962. I was a 26 year old, newly hired faculty librarian.

We went to lunch and she mentioned IFLA to me; she was involved with it, and asked if I had ever heard of it. I had, but only marginally. Being the Government Documents Librarian for OU, I managed US Federal, State of Oklahoma, and international document collections, including European Union and United Nations documents. Once she found out I worked with international information that was all she needed before she decided we should be colleagues and friends and that I should follow in her footsteps to become active in IFLA also. It was here I found out that when Laverne got an idea, it was best just to step out of the way and let her work.

### **Dr. Frances Laverne Carroll**

Dr. Carroll was 43 when she attended her first IFLA Conference in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1968, which happens to be the year I was born. Her last IFLA Conference was Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2004, thirty-six years later, which we attended together. She did not participate in every Conference during this time, but she attended most in her almost four-decades long relationship with IFLA.

In her first years with the Federation, in the early 1970s, she worked with the IFLA school libraries committees, was the Chairperson of the IFLA Section of School Libraries, and the Chairperson of the IFLA Planning Group for School Library Work. During the mid-1970s, she presented at two different IFLA Sessions, and worked on the 1978 UNESCO/IFLA contract *Guidelines for Planning an Organizing of School Library Media Centers*. During the late 1970s, she served on the IFLA Provisional Professional Board and wrote for a number of international library journals, completing a hearty series of interviews with past IFLA Presidents. If you look at the group photo from the 1974 *IFLA Annual* of Session participants, you can find Laverne right in the center in the front row, as she liked to be.

### ***A Chronology of Librarianship, 1960-2000***

It was Laverne that encouraged me to attend my first IFLA Conference, the 2001 Boston, Massachusetts, US, Session. We attended together and there she introduced me to her world of international librarianship and I was entranced; everyone I met was interesting and friendly and all of their work seemed immensely important. One of her colleagues she introduced me to was Dr. Norman Horrocks of Scarecrow Press and Dalhousie University Library School, Nova Scotia, Canada.

On Laverne's recommendation, there at Conference, Norman offered me the opportunity to write the follow-up to Josephine Metcalfe Smith's 1968 seminal Scarecrow Press title, *A Chronology of Librarianship*. Smith's volume covered the beginning of the Christian era to 1959. The idea that Norman had was for me to do a companion piece to this volume, covering, well, most everything that had happened in librarianship since Smith's book ended. I agreed happily, thrilled with the prospect.

Once back home, I began the laborious process of writing my first book. The initial obstacle was how to begin. After contemplation, I decided to base the methodology of my book on Smith's original. Thus, the goal of my book, like hers, was not to establish dates, only report them where found. Each entry would be arranged by date, and followed by a coded citation, which would be referenced in the Bibliography that occurs after the Chronological Tables. And with that, I began the book.

During this period of writing and research, Laverne and I had traveled to Glasgow, Scotland, UK, for the 2002 IFLA 75th Conference, to Berlin, Germany, for the 2003 Conference,

and to Buenos Aires, Argentina, for the 2004 Conference. After this Laverne ceased traveling and I put my nose to the grindstone to finish *A Chronology of Librarianship, 1960-2000*.

It was during this final period, in the hardscrabble part of research, that I realized that there was not an adequate volume on the history of IFLA; I could not locate a resource to give me the information that I wanted for my book. Now, granted, there were many fine short histories, but what was lacking was a full, bold chronology of the organization.

And I thought someone should rectify that.

### ***A Chronology of IFLA Sessions, 1927-2009***

In July 2009, Scarecrow Press published *A Chronology of Librarianship, 1960-2000*. Directly after this, still in the excited thrall of research and discovery, I contacted the IFLA Publications Office and explained an idea I had to do a full chronology of IFLA Sessions, 1927-2009. Working with Sjoerd Koopman, he encouraged me to complete the work, and said IFLA would be happy to publish it to their webpage. Thus in mid-2009, I began working on the chronology of IFLA that I had wanted and needed for my previous book. In the process I attended the 2009 IFLA Milan, Italy, Conference (the actual 75th Conference). This was my first IFLA Conference without Laverne and it was odd not to have her there guiding me through.

In starting the book, I decided to base its methodology on the methodology of my *A Chronology of Librarianship, 1960-2000*, which, as noted, was based on the methodology of Smith's *Chronology of Librarianship*. As per the subject matter, the core resources I utilized were IFLA produced volumes, including *IFLA Actes* (1927-1968), *IFLA Annual* (1969-2006), *IFLA Repertoire* (1931-1968), *IFLA Directory* (1971-present), *IFLA News* (1962-1974), *IFLA Journal* (1975-present), and the current IFLA website. To supplement these sources, I also consulted pertinent library journals (*Libri*, *Library Journal*, *Library Quarterly*, *UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries*, etc.) as well as books on the topic (Wedgeworth's *World Encyclopedia of Library and Information Services*, Wiegand and Davis' *Encyclopedia of Library History*, etc.).

In February 2011, IFLA published *A Chronology of IFLA Sessions, 1927-2009*, to their recently developed *IFLA History Corner* website.<sup>1</sup> Directly after this, I entered into discussion with Sjoerd Koopman and the publisher De Gruyter Saur about expanding my work and having it published as one of the green-backed *IFLA Publications Series* volumes. The idea was that this paper-published book would incorporate my *A Chronology of IFLA Sessions, 1927-2009*, as well as a new extensive Introductory History of IFLA and a number of new edits, additions, and updates of the original material through 2012. As 2012 was the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of IFLA, they also suggested making this book the commemorative volume to attend that celebration. I was thrilled and humbled by this prospect, to say the least.

I agreed to this, and in fall 2011, after attending the August 2011 San Juan, Puerto Rico, Conference, set to work on the project. As I began the writing, one of the first obstacles, as in all writing, was the editing. Throughout the writing of all of my books, there have been many specific editorial decisions, but a number of gems turned up in the editing of this volume.

There was a 1947 citation where I described newly elected President Munthe: "Munthe belonged to the old IFLA guard and had become familiar with its needs, problems, and responsibilities. With his personality bearing the imprint of Anglo-Saxon and German culture, he was known to be an outstanding expert on American librarianship and the author of a much-appreciated book: *American Librarianship from a European Angel*." On the second edit, I realized his book was actually titled, *American Librarianship from a European Angle*, which really brought the author back down to Earth.

Another humorous edit was a 1994 citation I had recorded thusly: “In his opening remarks, President Wedgeworth highlighted Cuba’s great successes in raising the general education level of its people and wiping out literacy throughout its own region.” It was not until I did a third or fourth complete edit that I realized it was ‘illiteracy’ that was wiped out, not ‘literacy.’

### **85 Years IFLA: A History and Chronology of Sessions, 1927-2012**

In summer 2012, De Gruyter Saur published *85 Years IFLA: A History and Chronology of Sessions, 1927-2012* as *IFLA Publication Series* 155. The volume is in two major parts - Part One: Introductory History and Part Two: Chronology of Sessions, 1927-2012. These are followed by a Bibliography, Appendixes, a Name Index, and About the Author.

#### **Part One: Introductory History**

Throughout the last 85 years, there have only been a handful of articles about the history of IFLA, and even fewer books on the topics. One of the best and most well-known books about the Federation is Willem R. H. Koops and Joachim Wieder’s *IFLA’s First Fifty Years*, produced in honor of IFLA’s 50th birthday in 1977. A lesser known but equally useful volume that focuses on the early years of the organization is Johanna de Vries’ 1976 Master’s Thesis, *The History of the International Federation of Library Associations, From its Creation to the Second World War, 1927-1940*. The *75th Anniversary* pamphlet disseminated at the 2002 Glasgow, Scotland, UK, Conference, by Carol Henry and Donald G. Davis, Jr., also added to this cannon of IFLA history.

More so than books, there have been a number of articles produced over the years that equally add volume to the history of the Federation. An impressive 1962 article is by Edith Scott, “IFLA and FID-History and Programs,” from the *Library Quarterly*.<sup>2</sup> Peter Harvard-Williams wrote a larger general survey with his 1977, “The History of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions,” in the *UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries*.<sup>3</sup> More recently, Harry Campbell published two fine historical pieces in the 2002 *IFLA Journal*. The first was “IFLA’s First Fifty Years: A Reprise,” which took extracts from Joachim Wieder’s introductory chapter from *IFLA’s First Fifty Years*, which Wieder also edited.<sup>4</sup> The second article, “IFLA: Library Universality in a Divided World” updated the previous article through 2001.<sup>5</sup>

As the internet has added an entirely new dimension to research, it has also presented a number of useful websites about the history of IFLA. The most useful pages are the ones produced by IFLA itself, including: *75 Years of IFLA*,<sup>6</sup> which gives a brief history of the organization, complete with photos. Also of considerable use are the IFLA websites that list the past conferences<sup>7</sup> as well as the sites that cover *IFLA’s Publications*,<sup>8</sup> and the recently developed *IFLA History Corner*.<sup>9</sup>

The Introductory History of my book melds information from all of these resources together to produce a thorough overview of IFLA over the last 85 years, 1927-2012.

#### **A Brief History of IFLA**

Not only is IFLA the largest international library association in the world but it is also the leading body representing the interests of library and information services and their users today.<sup>10</sup> IFLA was founded September 30, 1927, at the Annual Meeting of the [UK] Library Association in Edinburgh, Scotland, UK. The Federation began with fifteen members from fifteen different countries, and by 2012, on the 85th anniversary of this storied federation, IFLA

boasted 1,500 members in 151 countries.<sup>11</sup> And through the good years and the war years, through expansions and depressions, from books to the internet and beyond, IFLA has continued to grow and expand with no limit to its future progress.

The idea of an international library organization began in earnest post-World War I, with the establishment of the League of Nations in 1920. In 1926, the head of the French Library Association, presented a proposal to establish an international library federation, however it was not until 1927, at the Annual Meeting of the [UK] Library Association in Edinburgh, Scotland, UK, that the idea was made official by a seven-person working group. On September 30, 1927, the International Library and Bibliographical Committee was officially formed. This Committee would later be renamed the International Federation of Library Associations, or IFLA, in 1929. Isak G. A. Collijn, Director of the Royal Library of Stockholm, Sweden, and Chairman of the seven-person working group, was elected first Chairman (later President). By the end of the 1920's, the new body was formed, young and green, but formed.

The 1930's proved to be a time of growth and challenge for the new Federation. By mid-decade IFLA was a well-established body, with regular meetings, and had done much to give personal contact among the leading librarians of the world, without which an effective international collaboration in the field of librarianship was not possible.<sup>12</sup> It was during these years that IFLA suffered from the perception that it was a gentleman's club, a reference to its smallness and informality in conducting business.<sup>13</sup> And in reality in the pre-World War II years, IFLA did not produce very many tangible results. These were years of development, characterized by a steady growing number of members and attendance at meetings, by growing enthusiasm of the participants, showing in the volume of the annual *Actes*, by more and more contributions from members on national accomplishments, and an increasing number of Subcommittees.<sup>14</sup>

The 1940's were a time of war for the world, as well as IFLA. IFLA disbanded in late 1940 and stayed parted until May 1946. There was behind the scenes work done to keep the organization alive, and help with the war effort, but there were no meetings or Sessions held during these seven years. At war's end, with the advent of UNESCO, libraries were finally given international direction after so many years of war. The first meeting of the IFLA Executive Board since the war began was held in Geneva, Switzerland, in May 1946. This meeting led to the 1947, 13th IFLA Session, in Oslo, Norway that officially restarted the Federation and its activities.

The IFLA of the 1950's closely resembled the tight-knit IFLA of the 1930's, but with some notable exceptions. Membership grew, but not as exponentially as it would in later decades, and the organization continued to stay firmly planted in Europe. The *Statutes* were revised and long-term planning was added, but the structure remained basically as it had been since the Federation began in 1927. Funding increased, per the UNESCO subvention, but, again, not as grandly as many wanted. The Sessions progressed, with the highlight being the 1955 Third International Congress of Libraries and Documentation Centers in Brussels, Belgium. The biggest difference in IFLA of the 1950's and the earlier years was the Federation's interaction with the Documentalists, starting in 1951.

The swinging 60's for IFLA was a period of great growth, with membership rising from 81 members in 1960 to 231 in 1969. This growth was a result of the 1964 change in the *Statutes* which created the new 'Associate' membership, opening IFLA up to more of the world. This growth was reflected at Session, where more and more attendees began to participate, sometimes with deleterious results, such as an increased number of dilettantes cluttering the Sessions. This

growth also necessitated more funding, which IFLA often, sadly, found lacking. Luckily by the end of the decade the finances had turned around and the Federation found itself in a stronger place than it had ever been. In the realm of milestones, the sixties had its share, including the 1961 Parisian International Conference on Cataloging Principles, the establishment of the first permanent Secretariat in 1962, the first Session theme in 1966 (“Libraries and Documentation”), and the 1963 publication of President Hoffmann’s *Libraries in the World: A Long-Term Program for IFLA*, which signaled the Federation’s turning point as a truly international organization on the world stage.

The decade of the 1970’s birthed a number of firsts for IFLA. Not only did IFLA have its first female Secretary General, but also its first female President. At Session, the first pre-session was held as well as its first technology exhibit. But the overall expression of the 1970’s for IFLA was a time of stupendous growth. IFLA began the decade in 1970 with 257 members and ended it in 1979 with 906! But this level of growth and increased internationally accepted role necessitated huge administration problems which called for a strengthening of the organization. For this reason the *Statutes* and the *Constitution* were both revised to accommodate this larger Federation. An offspring of this growth and development was a coordinated IFLA publishing program, with the *IFLA Directory* and *IFLA Journal* both premiering during the decade. But all was not clear sailing for IFLA during the 1970’s, as rocky waters were hit when UNESCO briefly dropped its consultative status with IFLA over issues concerning South African Apartheid.

The 1980’s were a time of geographic growth based on the internal organizational evolution of the Federation during the 1970’s. After the restructuring of IFLA in 1976, the organization flourished and expanded, and did it ever, hosting its first Session in Asia, Africa, and Australia, all in a ten year period. Even though membership only grew marginally (966 members in 1980 to 1,265 in 1989), the Federation itself continued to grow internally. A number of new initiatives appeared in the 1980’s, including the Universal Availability of Publications Program and the Advancement of Librarianship Program (ALP). But amid this growth there were still challenges, including in 1981 when China agreed to join only if IFLA dropped the membership of the Taiwanese associations.

The 1990’s for IFLA, like the rest of the developed world, was driven by technological achievements that appeared at first divergent but eventually brought people together. In 1993, IFLA’s website, IFLANET, was created and the Federation began using e-mail, and later the internet, to connect with the world. By decade’s end, most of IFLA’s work was being done online, including the publishing of documents and the organization of Sessions. In 1998, at the Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Opening Session, balls of colored yarn were tossed through the audience to “weave everyone into the Web.”<sup>15</sup> Indeed. The 1990’s were a time of some growth for IFLA, as membership increased marginally from 1,243 members to 1,623, but also a time of firsts. In 1994, a Session was first held in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 1996, a Session was finally held in China. And in 1999, for the first time, a Session was held in a developing country (Thailand). The 1990’s also saw the development of many internal funding mechanisms as well as the Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) Committee and six new Discussion Groups.

The opening of the new Millennium brought its share of challenges to the world as well as IFLA, but the Federation persevered and continued to expand and evolve. In 2000, the *Statutes* and *Rules of Procedure* were revised again, bringing a new structure and progressive changes to IFLA. In 2001, the first postal ballot was held to elect a President-Elect, who would

go on to be President in two years. Also in 2001, IFLA reached the zenith of its country membership with 155 country members. In 2002, the IFLA Round Tables were dissolved and most of them transformed into Sections, and the Conferences began being called “World Library and Information Congresses.” IFLA also celebrated its 75th anniversary at the 2002 Conference in Glasgow, Scotland, UK, with a membership of 1,711 members in 151 countries. The year 2006 saw the pinnacle of membership in IFLA, with 1,784 recorded. The year 2008 saw new *Statutes* and in 2009 the actual 75th IFLA Session was held in Milan, Italy. And through all of this, the internet not only grew, but became the most used communication tool of the decade, with Conference blogs and tweets even being tracked and archived on the IFLA website by 2008.

At its 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the 78th IFLA Session/World Library and Information Congress: General Conference and Assembly in Helsinki, Finland, IFLA was fit and exuberant. With the development of the 1930’s, the diligence of the 1940’s, the determination of the 1950’s, the internationalism of the 1960’s, the growth of the 1970’s, the adventure of the 1980’s, and the technology of the 1990’s and 2000’s, IFLA is set to continue to expand. With its greatest years ahead of it, IFLA looks proudly forward and continues to define and redefine its role as the world’s leading organization for international librarianship, the steward for librarians all over the world, and the keeper of civilization’s knowledge.

## **Part Two: The Chronology of Sessions, 1927-2012**

After the Introductory History, the book presents a replication of my 2011 IFLA published *A Chronology of IFLA Sessions, 1927-2009*, expanded, edited, and updated to 2012. This Chronology allows you find specific data on each of the IFLA Sessions 1927-2012, and thus the workings of IFLA itself. You can use this Chronology to research the themes, attendance, or topics covered at each of the first 85 Sessions. You can use this Chronology to find information on one year specifically, information for a decade, or data on all 78 of the IFLA Sessions in the first 85 years of IFLA’s history. You can use this Chronology to find data evidently replicated in other volumes, such as the yearly listing of the theme of each Session, as listed in the *IFLA Directory*. But you can also use this Chronology to find data that has heretofore not been compiled into one source, such as attendance, speakers, and host location of each Session.

Each yearly listing is divided into 24 categories. These categories include: title of the session (including the country and city where it was held, and the dates it was held), theme of the Session, number of participants who attended the Session and how many countries they represented, who was the Secretary General, and President, as well as many others. Not every year has something in each category, especially in the early years when the Sessions were much shorter and less intensive. Many of these themes did not begin until later in IFLA’s life, such as the Poster Session which did not begin at Session until 1988.

## **Use of the Chronological Tables**

The use of this Chronology, like the ones before it, lies in its great variety. You can use this Chronology to track changes in Conference themes, from the early themes, like the 1968 Frankfurt, Germany, theme of *Books and Libraries in an Industrial Society*, to the 2003 Berlin, Germany, theme of *Access Point Library-Information-Culture*. It can be used to track the placement of the Session, from strictly European cities, to being hosted all over the world. You can use it to track the magnificent locations where IFLA Session events have been hosted, including the Vatican, the Library of Congress, the Louvre, and the Sydney Opera House.

This Chronology can be used to track the attendance at the different Sessions, from the first Session to break 100 attendees (Brussels, Belgium, in 1955), the least attended Conference in the last twenty-five years (Nairobi, Kenya, in 1984, with 1,000 participants), to the most well attended Session in the Federation's history (2001 Boston, Massachusetts, US, with 5,300 attendees). It can also be used to track the remarkable personages from history who have attended the Sessions, including Benito Mussolini and Pope Pius XI in 1929, King Baudouin of Belgium in 1977, Queen Margrethe II of Denmark in 1979 and 1997, President Ferdinand and First Lady Imelda Marcos of the Philippines in 1980, their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and Princess of Japan in 1986, the King and Queen of Sweden in 1990, Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand in 1999, and King Harald of Norway in 2005.

This Chronology can also be used to track library trends across the years. In 1932, one of the topics of discussion was the continued Great Depression, where libraries were taking cuts to their hours and staffs while their circulation numbers continued to rise from the rush of use by the recently unemployed. How similar this is to the Great Recession of 2009, that left many unemployed and running to their libraries for free help, only to find these cash-strapped institutions having to close up many of their doors? In 1937, in his opening remarks, President Godet spoke of the basically indestructible power of the book in a period increasingly dominated by emerging mass media like radio and film. How familiar this is to the late 1990's and 2000's, as the internet replaced paper sources, with librarians left trying to save many of their paper collections?

### **The Importance of Mentorship**

In closing, I would like to reiterate my thanks to Dr. Frances Laverne Carroll for all the opportunities she has presented me over the years. Laverne has continued to enjoy her retirement in Norman, Oklahoma, and I still visit her weekly. I know she continues to send everyone at IFLA her blessings, and she wishes she could be with them visiting, laughing, and reminiscing.

Without Laverne's mentorship, none of this would have ever occurred; I may never have found IFLA and for that my life would be a lot less interesting. Mentorship is ever more important to the profession, as the profession itself is currently changing so rapidly. It seems that the librarians graduating today are entering into a professional world the librarians of the past could never even have imagined. But both generations of librarians have something to offer the other: the technological texting knowhow of the new generation to the paper card catalog wisdom of the older generation. Mentorship can bridge that gap, and in all the places they intersect. And in a world where computers have replaced so much, the power of face-to-face mentorship can never be replaced by electronics.

I suggest long-term librarians find a new up and coming librarian to mentor, to talk to, to pass on their institutional knowledge. And for new librarians, I recommend finding an elder in the profession and talk to, to find out their perspectives, and learn about your new profession from someone who has already done it. And in this way, I hope the profession continues to flourish, as I have seen my own self flourish under Laverne's kind tutelage.

My concluding hope is that this final product, this *85 Years IFLA: A History and Chronology of Sessions, 1927-2012*, will be as useful to future researchers as it has been to me. I feel I have now written the book that I originally needed and wanted for my own research.



## A Surprise Connection

As a final note, I would also like to point out a personal connection I discovered during my research. As I read and research the beginning of IFLA's history I came across the figure of Carl Milam, American Library Association Secretary 1920-1948, and one of the original 1927 IFLA founders and signers of the final Resolution that established the International Library and Bibliographical Committee (later IFLA). Through happenchance I came across an article that noted that he called my home institution of the University of Oklahoma his alma mater and, in fact, began his illustrious library career at the same library that I work in today.

I was thrilled by this discovery, as it brought me personally closer to the subject matter and gave power to the fact that one lone Oklahoma librarian could have an effect on international librarianship. And this made me feel that maybe I had just one more mentor out there guiding me to this end.

## Citations

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