

FROM THE RTMLA WORKSHOP AT 'CRIMEA 2001' - Sudak, Ukraine (Crimea), June 9th - 16th 2001

By Tore Andersen

Background

The first Crimean Library Conference took place in 1991 and have since been an annual event. The Conference arenas are at Crimea (now an autonomous republic within Ukraine). The initiative came from central Russian librarians, among them Mr. Yakov Shraiberg, who is now First deputy Director of Russian National Public Library for Science and Technology in Moscow. This library is also the main organiser. The conference is supported by Russian Federation and by Ukraine ministries and officials.

The main financial support is from Open Society Institute (Soros Foundation), Russia.

The main event is located to a conference centre in Sudak, and satellite events are taking place around Crimea. This year there were approximately 1.200 participants at the conference, representing 30 nationalities. Russia and Ukraine had by far the largest numbers of participants.

The RTMLA/FAIFE workshop

The workshop took place on June 11th and was chaired by Mr. Vladimir Zaitsev, president of the Russian Library Association.

The program was as follows:

1. 'Library and Politics'
Mr. Mogens Damm, president of Danish Library Association
2. 'Library Associations and their role in solving professional problems'
Mr. Vladimir Zaitsev
3. 'Library associations: Establishing - finances - structure - and pleasure'
Mr. Tore Kr. Andersen
4. 'EBLIDA and Current European library policy issues'
Mr. Mogens Damm
5. 'Professional and human programs of the International Association of Users and Designers of Digital Libraries and New Information Technologies'
Mr. Boris Marshak, Executive Director of (IAUDDLNIT)
6. 'Vital issues of IFLA Policy: The FAIFE Committee - Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression'
Mr. Tore Kr. Andersen

Number of participants at the workshop was approx. 35, with a great variety of nationalities. Both IFLA members and non-members were represented.

One of the more exotic library associations, was the Uzbekistan Womens Library Association, which had only female members, although there was no strict prohibition of male membership.

The discussion issues regarding library association policies, on the audience's part, were concentrated mainly on the following:

- problems and solutions on how to involve politicians on library issues
- library laws
- financing problems

There were useful discussions on these and other issues.

On the FAIFE theme, we were stressing the importance of supplying FAIFE with national reports to the FAIFE World Report. We were also informing on the upcoming reorganising of the FAIFE Committee during this year.

There were obviously certain doubts about the IFLA procedure regarding these national reports. An important point was that it is very difficult to make such a national report anonymous. As the issue of freedom of expression is more problematic in some countries, FAIFE should follow up with visits to these countries, according to some participants. In a sense it also is a vulnerable group, as they for financial reasons are very dependent on official or governmental support.

An example: We were handed an invitation to a Library Conference in one of the participating countries where it was stated that the organising committee "reserves the right to itself of selecting and editing papers.....".

Financing

The main cost for this workshop were travel expenses and hotel expenses and diets for Mr Damm and Mr Andersen.

The total costs are not yet ready, but totals to approx.

USDollars 2.500 for Mr. Damm, and
USDollars 2.100 for Mr. Andersen,
- totalling approx. USDollars 4.600 for the IFLA participation.

The financing of Mr. Andersen's expenses was partly covered by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and partly by Norwegian Library Association. (Using the national RTMLA budget, as the mid-year meeting was cancelled).

The financing of Mr. Damm's expenses were covered partly by RTMLA, and partly by Danish Library Association.

Conclusions and recommendations

There is no doubt the IFLA (RTMLA and FAIFE) representation and the workshop was highly appreciated by the organisers and by the conference participants.

In our view, the Crimea conferences is a very important meeting point for many of the library associations and groups that are usually not represented at the annual IFLA Meetings. The reason for this is mainly the financing from the Soros Foundation, which makes it possible for librarians from for instance Vladivostok and Arkhangelsk to join the conference. As the duration of the Crimea Conference is one week, there was time for making many good connections with representatives from various library associations and key officials among the cultural authorities from Eastern Europe. We would recommend that, if possible, there should be an IFLA representative (RTMLA or FAIFE) at the coming Crimea Conferences.