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Dynamic partners

German librarians and IFLA

On the 30th of September 1927, in Edinburgh, representatives of fifteen national library associations signed a resolution to establish the International Library and Bibliographical Committee (a few years later to become IFLA – the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions). The resolution was the result of years of discussion and a concentrated set of days of negotiation. In one report it is noted that two outstanding personalities had distinguished themselves by their exceptional tact and skillful negotiating: Hugo Andres Krüss, Director General of the Preußische Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, and Carl H Milam, the ALA Secretary from Chicago. Among the fifteen original library associations to sign the resolution was Germany.

There from the start

Not only does the record show that Germany has been involved in IFLA from the start but that German librarians who believed in international librarianship and a new international professional organisation have been influential throughout its history. It continues today with a diverse group of German librarians and information specialists taking their place on IFLA's committees as members and in leadership roles. Indeed, many have been recognised over time with IFLA's highest honours and awards.

Engaged and involved in IFLA's Committees

Some find the structure of IFLA difficult to understand with its many committees working at different levels and on diverse actions for the greater good of the global library field. Committees may contribute to the profession by developing resources such as library standards or guidelines, translating material into different languages, assessing new issues, or educating others via a webinar.

There are currently 44 German librarians volunteering their expertise and time.

At the peak strategic level is the IFLA Governing Board, led in 2021-2023 by President Barbara Lison (Library Director, Stadtbibliothek Bremen). Under the Governing Board are the two pillars of the regional structure and the professional structure. Within the professional structure, many are familiar with IFLA's Sections that cover almost every aspect of librarianship and information science. Each section has a committee made up of 20 members from around the world. It is a unique aspect of engagement with IFLA – to be on a committee with members from every continent, who each bring their perspective and experience to discussions and activities. The world meets together in these committees and rather than see only differences, members see the commonalities.

Environment, Sustainability and Libraries Section	3
Science and Technology Libraries Section	3
Metropolitan Libraries Section	2
Subject Analysis and Access Section	2
Preservation and Conservation Section	2
Rare Books and Special Collections Section	2
Management of Library Associations Section	2
Library Services to People with Special Needs Section	2
Library Buildings and Equipment Section	2

Chart 1: IFLA Committees with 2-3 German members

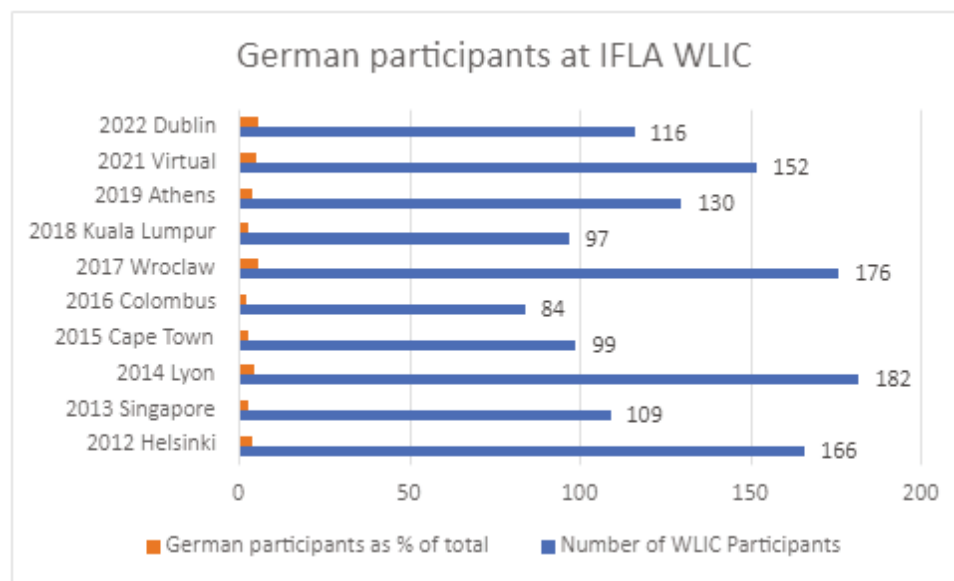


Chart 2: German participants at IFLA WLIC

There are currently 44 German librarians volunteering their expertise and time on IFLA's Professional Section Committees. 18% hold a leadership position on the committee as the Chair, Secretary, or Information Coordinator, providing a substantial contribution to IFLA.

One of the chief benefits of IFLA membership is the possibility to nominate people to serve on committees.

These volunteers are on 78% of the Section Committees, giving voice to a German viewpoint on a range of issues. Most of the Committees have one German member except those ones in chart 1 which have 2-3 members.

In addition, there are German librarians on these committees:

- Europe Regional Division
- Library Publishing Special Interest Group
- Advisory Committee on Cultural Heritage
- International Standard Bibliographic Description (ISBD) Review Group

One of the chief benefits of IFLA membership is the possibility to nominate people to serve on committees. Not only do those who are nominated get an opportunity of a great personal and professional experience, but their institutions and associations

benefit from the knowledge and connections they develop.

2023 is an IFLA election year with new committees being elected for the term 2023-2025. The term begins at the end of the IFLA World Library and Information Congress in Rotterdam in August 2023. The nomination period will start in January with elections in March and April, so if you are interested in engaging internationally in your area of expertise, speak with a German colleague and ask a member if they will support your nomination. A list of IFLA members in each country is available on the IFLA website along with more information on the nominations and elections.

The numbers

It's a fact. Germany has the second highest number of members within IFLA. Only the USA has more institutions and association members. There are multiple library associations in Germany that are members of IFLA, although this is not unusual as many countries have a range of different professional associations, and also in some cases, regional or sectoral associations. Canada lies at one extreme with 23 national associations and a large number of regional or local associations. In the majority are countries with only one library association. IFLA also has member countries where associations are forbidden and where the national library may assume the leading role for the profession.

IFLA, as a federation, provides a space for each German association to find their international level and partners, depending on their own interests and directions. For the 53 institutional members, whether a university library, public library or a special library for patents, law or parliaments, each will benefit from connections to similar libraries around the world.

IFLA World Library and Information Congress (WLIC)

Librarians may talk of going to IFLA. They don't mean that they will visit the IFLA offices in The Hague, rather they mean that they will attend the World Library and Information Congress held by IFLA each year. The location of the congress moves around the world, but German librarians have always been interested in attending as delegates and also as speakers and poster presenters. By having speakers and presenters at each conference, Germany benefits from greater visibility on the world stage of its library environment and activities. German librarians are given tremendous support from the strong library associations who regularly provide grants to librarians and library

1 Data availability = Number of metrics for which data is available / Number of all metrics on the Library Map of the World. Country data availability percentage index is calculated as the percentage of available data from the country on the Library Map (across all library types). Non-applicable metrics are excluded from the calculation.

2 Rank is the country's standing in data availability among all countries with published data on the Library Map.



Germany has actively engaged in IFLA's Library Map of the World project since its beginning in 2017.

students to attend the conference. In recent years, the Goethe Institut has partnered with IFLA to provide grants aimed at young, emerging librarians.

Chart 2 shows the number of German participants at WLIC and the participants as a percentage of the total number of delegates. Over the years, the percentage has ranged from 2.5% in Columbus, Ohio to 6% in Dublin, Ireland.

Germany on the Map

Germany has actively engaged in IFLA's Library Map of the World project since its beginning in 2017. It is currently represented with all three content types covered by the Map – library data, country profile, and SDG stories. Germany first appeared on the Map with library statistics, which have been updated every year. The full country profile was added in 2020. The two SDG stories were published in 2019 and in 2021.

IFLA works with two organisations in Germany which are established Main Contributors for library data and the country profile. These organisations take responsibility for collaboration with local partners and stakeholders in the country during the data gathering process and the preparation of content for the country profile. They serve as the key point of contact for the Library Map of the World team when it comes to data submission and keeping published contents up to date.

German Library Statistics (Deutsche Bibliotheksstatistik, DBS) is a committed data contributor providing nationally aggregated library statistics for the Map on an annual basis. Germany's data availability percentage index¹ is 60.32% and with this it ranks² 29 in data availability among all countries with published data on the Map.

The German Library Association (Deutscher Bibliotheksverband e.V.) is the main contributor of content for the full country profile providing information about the library environment in Germany.

The two SDG Story Contributors are the Public Libraries Hamburg (Bücherhallen Hamburg), featuring its »Dialog in Deutsch« programme helping refugees in finding their way, and the Bremen Public Library (Stadtbibliothek Bremen), sharing their experience in providing future training opportunities for refugees and other newcomers. Further stories are always welcome.

Global library policy goals

Perhaps inevitably given its size and influence on its neighbours and beyond, Germany is an im-

portant player in many of the issues on which IFLA is most active at the global level. IFLA draws heavily on the work of our German members in order to build a stronger understanding of and support for libraries among policymakers globally.

On the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Biblio2030 initiative was a pioneer, and one that has inspired others to follow. Research among German libraries into their engagement around the SDGs has also been important in encouraging a deeper level of engagement in the goals.

On copyright, the successes of German libraries around eBooks, as well as on broader reforms, provide a model for others. Many aspects of German law are cited elsewhere as models, not least in the context of the Knowledge Rights 21 Programme of which IFLA is a part. While progress is slow at WIPO, the German delegation is a valued interlocutor. As for open access, this is another area where practice in Germany has a major resonance elsewhere.

On culture, the German UNESCO Commission is a welcome friend of libraries in discussions about how to realise the potential of our institutions to support development. Finally, German libraries have been leaders around climate change and environmental issues, helping to get this further onto the agenda, and to build understanding and awareness that libraries are actors in this space.

From its earliest beginnings, German librarians have supported the concept of an international body, one that can represent the concerns of libraries and library associations on a global level. Librarians have stepped outside their national borders to engage with others from varying countries and different circumstances where all benefit from a richness of experience and a depth of expertise. The current ties between IFLA and German associations, institutions and individuals sets the scene for a continuing dynamic partnership.

Helen Mandl is Acting Secretary General of IFLA.