

Published sources and themes for the historiography of IFLA

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Brief Bio:

Peter Johan Lor holds a D.Phil. degree (1991) as well as an honorary doctorate (2008) from the University of Pretoria. He was South Africa's first National Librarian (2000-2003), and served as Secretary General of IFLA during 2005-2008. In retirement he continues to pursue scholarly interests as a research associate in the Department of Information Science, University of Pretoria. He has published a book and many papers on international and comparative librarianship. In the context of preparations for IFLA's centenary in 2027, his current research focuses on the history of IFLA.

Abstract

The centenary of IFLA is approaching. IFLA's Library History Special Interest Group has embarked on various projects to prepare for the event, including the compilation of an edited volume of scholarly chapters on IFLA's history. This article originated as a background paper for members of the Library History Special Interest Group and others who may be contemplating conducting research on IFLA with a view to the centenary in 2027. An overview is given of published sources for the historiography of IFLA. These include publications about IFLA published by IFLA and its structures, and by other parties. IFLA's own publications include guidelines and standards; policy statements; reports on the work of its professional units and strategic advisory committees; the IFLA Publications Series; and report series such as the IFLA World Reports and Trend Reports. Much of this material is published on IFLA's websites, both current and archived. It provides valuable evidence of IFLA's activities. In this article, the emphasis is on material about IFLA published by IFLA itself and by other parties.

The literature about IFLA includes historical accounts published as articles, books, book chapters and theses. Many contain useful bibliographies. With a view to identifying topics and themes for the historiography of IFLA, the subject matter of some 294 items about IFLA published from 2000 to 2022 inclusive is analysed. Brief attention is paid to possible themes emerging from the literature that may be useful in developing research on IFLA.

Keywords: IFLA; historiography; published sources; bibliography; research themes

Introduction

On 30 September 1927, during a conference of the (British) Library Association in Edinburgh, a decision was made to establish what was initially called the International Library and Bibliographical Committee. Although IFLA regards 1927 as the year of its foundation, it was not until 1929 when the constitution proposed by the Committee and the name International Federation of Library Associations were adopted (Wilhite, 2012). In 1976, IFLA changed its name to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, but retained the acronym IFLA (pronounced ‘if-lah’), which had by then become a recognised ‘brand’.

This article is intended as a background for scholars who may be contemplating research on IFLA with a view to its centenary in 2027. It is intended as a contribution to preparations for that centenary by the IFLA Library History Special Interest Group. It outlines the major categories of published source material; presents an analysis of topics and themes in the published literature during the period 2000–2022; and suggests some themes that may be worth exploring.

Categories of published sources

Various categories of published materials can be distinguished and are discussed below. The primary distinction to be made is between publications produced or published *by* IFLA and those *about* IFLA. This article deals with publications *about* IFLA (some of which will have been produced or published by IFLA).

IFLA corporate publications: conference reports, minutes, and papers

An excellent point of departure in accessing both the published and unpublished materials in this category is the chronology of IFLA, *85 Years IFLA: A History and Chronology of Sessions, 1927–2012*, painstakingly compiled by Jeffrey M Wilhite (2012) and covering the 85-year period from the founding of IFLA in 1927 to 2012. In addition to a substantial ‘Introductory history’ (Part 1, 23–92) covering this period, in Part 2 Wilhite provides a year-by-year account of important events and stages in IFLA’s development. The terms used to refer to IFLA’s conferences evolved over the years, and Wilhite’s year-by-year account enables the researcher to follow these changes, as well as the dates on which major committees, professional units and initiatives were started.

Wilhite’s (2012) main sources were the proceedings of IFLA ‘sessions’ as published in the *Actes du Comité international des bibliothèques*, later known as the *Actes du Conseil général/Proceedings of the General Council* (1927–1968), and their successor series. Listing the publications in the series chronologically with their dates of coverage in his Appendix 2, Wilhite titles them ‘Core IFLA research sources’. In the early years, the proceedings were mainly in French and, as a result, they are generally referred to as the *Actes*. The *Actes* were

detailed and quite substantial reports, with accounts of the papers presented, discussions, committee meetings and IFLA activities. Technically, whilst mainly printed for distribution to the IFLA membership and stakeholders, these are published sources, as they were also offered for sale to a more general audience. The titles used for these proceedings reflected the naming of the meetings, being referred to first as ‘sessions’ (1927–1952).

The major part of Wilhite’s (2012) book (Part 2) offers a ‘Chronology of sessions’ for the period 1927 to 2012. ‘Sessions’ refers to the meetings of what was initially called the International Library and Bibliographical Committee – annual meetings of representatives of the Federation’s member associations (the words ‘and Bibliographical’ were dropped in 1928). Larger international meetings were to take place every five years. The first was the First International Congress of Libraries and Bibliography, held in Italy in 1929, at which time IFLA’s constitution and name – International Federation of Library Associations – were adopted. These meetings were difficult to organise. The second international congress was held in Madrid in 1935. The third, planned for Germany, was abandoned when the Second World War broke out. After the war, the scope of the ‘sessions’ gradually expanded to much larger annual conferences. The term ‘conference’ only emerged in 1980. What old-timers knew as the ‘IFLA conference’ became the IFLA World Library and Information Congress in 2003.

These developments were reflected in successive name changes, which are listed by Wilhite (2012: 347). Wilhite devotes several pages to each session, covering the venue (or venues – on several occasions they were held in more than one city) and dates of the meeting; its theme; the number of participants; the number of open sessions; the workshops and other events; the president and secretary general; and reports, announcements and major decisions. There is also information about IFLA generally, such as the composition of IFLA’s governance bodies and

administrative personnel; the number, types and activities of professional units; membership numbers; and significant IFLA publications in the relevant year. There are useful appendices, a bibliography and a detailed name index.

The *Actes* were succeeded by the *IFLA Annual* (1969–1995). In the early years the proceedings were mainly in French and as a result they are generally referred to as the *Actes*. The full series, from 1928 to 1968, is now freely available in the Hathi Trust Digital Library. Wilhite (2012) also lists a number of other sources, including the *IFLA Repertoire* (1931–1968); the *UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries* (1947–1978); the ‘IFLA communications’ section, which appeared in the journal *Libri* (1953–1974); *IFLA News* (1962–1974); the *IFLA Directory* (1971–2003);¹ *IFLA Journal* (1975–), which replaced *IFLA News*; and the *UNESCO Journal of Information Science, Librarianship, and Archives Administration* (1979–1983), which was the successor of the *UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries*. Over time, as IFLA grew and became more complex, the degree of detail in these sources tended to diminish.

The IFLA annual reports can be accessed by searching on IFLA’s website, although the search function is not very intuitive.² This link confusingly also brings up the annual reports of IFLA sections, in no particular order. This brings us to the next, overlapping, category.

IFLA publications arising from its professional activities

Over its almost 100 years, IFLA has published a vast amount of information in addition to the resources referred to above. These include standards and guidelines, manifestos and statements of principles, technical reports, reports on research projects, reports on conferences and workshops, and major report series such as the IFLA World Reports and the more recent Trend

Reports.³ In recent years, these have increasingly been published online. To gain an impression of the variety of materials, one should examine the ‘Type’ options in the search box on the IFLA’s ‘Resources’ web page.⁴ These publications are not necessarily about IFLA itself, but reflect what it does and the significance of its activities. One should also mention the publications relating to IFLA’s annual World Library and Information Congress, including prospectuses, promotional newsletters and the congress programme.⁵

IFLA has several publications series. The best known are the *IFLA Journal*, IFLA Publications Series, IFLA Series on Bibliographic Control and IFLA Professional Reports. The *IFLA Journal* has been published quarterly since 1975 and a brief history marked its 40th anniversary (Mansfield, 2014). It is by no means confined to material about IFLA or arising from IFLA congresses, but includes news items about IFLA. It is published in print and online and is available online on the Sage Journals website (from 1975) and open access via the IFLA site (from 1993).⁶

The IFLA Publications Series is a monograph series (ISSN 0344-6891) or ‘greenbacks’ published by De Gruyter.⁷ Two or three issues appear every year, with many of them emanating from workshops and conferences about professional matters. At the time of writing, the most recent one was Number 183.

The *IFLA journal* has been published quarterly since 1975 and a brief history marked its 40th anniversary (Mansfield 2014). It is by no means confined to material about IFLA or arising from IFLA congresses, but it includes news items about IFLA. It is published in print and online and is available online on the SAGE Publications website¹ (from 1975) and on open access via the IFLA site (from 1993).²

A significant proportion of the publications about IFLA's activities are produced by IFLA's professional units (sections, special interest groups, advisory committees and divisions). They issue publications about their activities, such as annual reports, reports on project outcomes, professional and technical reports and guidelines for best practice, and newsletters. This also applies to the former 'Core Activities', some of which are now advisory committees.⁸ Each of the professional units has a page on IFLA's website. Their publications are listed there, mostly with clickable links where one can download them. A good example is the web page of the Cataloguing Section, which over decades has been very active in various projects and especially in developing and publishing international standards and guidelines for cataloguing.⁹ On its site, there is an extensive list of its publications. The Cataloguing Section also has a 'Section Archive', which lists older publications and unpublished materials such as annual reports, strategic plans and meeting reports.¹⁰ The Section's *Metadata Newsletter* can be accessed via its web page as well.¹¹

Special mention should be made of the many manifestos, declarations, statements, position statements, guidelines and standards of various kinds. They make important contributions to the dissemination of professional best practice and to advocacy for the place of libraries in the international arena. Although it is not their primary purpose, these documents constitute evidence of IFLA's activities. Often, they are prefaced by an introduction describing the processes through which they were produced.

IFLA's institutional repository, the IFLA Library, should not be overlooked. It was launched in 2013 and is growing steadily, as congress papers and other resources are added to it continuously. It can be searched and browsed, and access to the materials is instantaneous.¹²

IFLA publications about itself

In common with other organisations of its nature, IFLA has produced many publications introducing and promoting itself, and describing its activities. Among other publications, the annual reports, referred to above, serve this purpose. On the IFLA website there is a page about IFLA's history, giving references and clickable links to PDF files. This site also includes publications other than those of IFLA itself.¹³ Individual professional units have also published brochures aimed at recruiting members. Many of these have been ephemeral, but more recently they have been published on the website and can be found by searching, for example, for 'brochures' using the search function mentioned above. Indeed, today, the IFLA website is the single most important source of information about IFLA, and a search there is indispensable in any historical research. This leads us to the next category.

Bibliographic sources

A serious search should include the use of bibliographic databases such as LISA: Library and Information Science Abstracts, now part of the ProQuest stable. LISA has been seen as offering better international coverage. EBSCO's Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts is a free open-access database for library and information science. A search on the term 'IFLA' immediately pulls up almost 8000 references in at least seven languages, many of them about the Library Reference Model, a high-level conceptual model for bibliographic control data that is currently receiving much attention. A huge number of items can be found very rapidly, but in no particular order, using Google Scholar. The lack of order promotes serendipity. One finds useful items, both older and very recent, for which one is not specifically looking, with the advantage that an electronic copy can often be accessed at the same time.

Several published histories of IFLA include useful bibliographies. The history of IFLA from 1927 to 1940 was the subject of a Master's dissertation submitted to Loughborough University of Technology by Johanna L de Vries (1976). Her bibliography includes short contemporary articles from British library journals (mainly the *Library Association Record*) and the Dutch library journal *Bibliotheekleven*, and some items in French and German. Some of the older works cited by De Vries provide contemporary accounts of meetings of the International Library Committee (e.g. Theissen, 1928) and of the World Congress of Libraries and Bibliography (e.g. Leendertz, 1936). Many of these were intended as reports by conference delegates to the library associations they had represented. It would be interesting to compare them with the 'official' accounts of these events. Two 'term papers' (*Hausarbeiten*) submitted to the Bibliothekar-Lehrinstitut des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, the library school of the West German federal state of Nordrhein-Westfalen, also deal with the history of IFLA (Haselbach, 1967; Heinzle, 1977).

An important source for the history of IFLA's first 50 years is the celebratory volume *IFLA's First Fifty Years: Achievements and Challenges in International Librarianship* (Koops and Wieder, 1977), published as IFLA Publication No. 10 and reprinted in 2011 as an e-book by De Gruyter. It includes a substantial chronological overview of IFLA's development (Wieder, 1977), with a long list of references. Wieder makes heavy use of IFLA's *Actes* and its various successors, but also cites journal articles in various languages about IFLA's development; these were predominantly published after the Second World War. A selection of extracts from this chapter, with photographs of all the IFLA presidents, was published 25 years later, but did not update the 1977 chapter (Wieder and Campbell, 2002). There is a substantial well-referenced chapter on the 'prehistory' of IFLA, providing a useful chronology of 11 international library

and bibliographic conferences that preceded the foundation of IFLA (Rudomino, 1977), and a detailed account of American (and Canadian) involvement in the birth and early years of IFLA. This includes an enlightening report on the moral crisis that resulted from the German invitation to hold the 3rd International Congress in Germany in 1940 (Mohrhardt, 1977). The remaining chapters in this volume are shorter. Some offer the personal reminiscences of key figures such as Arthur Breycha-Vauthier, Sir Frank Francis and Herman Liebaers, all of which provide some insight into the ‘gentlemen’s club’ that ran IFLA in its earlier years. Others discuss IFLA’s relationship with the socialist countries of Eastern Europe (Vladimirov, 1977) and developing countries (e.g. Jordan, 1977), and reflect on IFLA’s future. In the introduction to Koops and Wieder’s (1977) volume, the editors refer to a special issue of *IFLA Journal* entitled ‘IFLA and contemporary library problems’, also to be compiled for the 50th anniversary. It was to consist of articles taking the then newly introduced divisional structure of IFLA as its point of departure.

A bibliography on IFLA was compiled for the Federation’s General Council (i.e. conference) in Washington in 1974, edited by Edward P Cambio at the Library of Congress. It contains a general introduction to IFLA, which is followed by a multilingual bibliography of general items about IFLA, with an emphasis on the International Conference on Cataloguing Principles (Paris) and other meetings. The section ‘About IFLA’ has a chronological list of sessions (conferences) with publications emanating from them. It includes publications relating to the International Office for Universal Bibliographic Control and International Office for International Lending, and works about individual sections (Cambio, 1974). In 1977, an updated second edition of *The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions: A Selected List of References* was published by Verlag Dokumentation as IFLA Publication No. 11 (Cambio, 1977). This formed part of the 50th-anniversary celebrations. At

52 pages, it is a greatly expanded version of its 17-page predecessor, with comprehensive coverage of the international offices for Universal Bibliographic Control and Universal Availability of Publications, the International Association of Metropolitan City Libraries, IFLA's 21 sections and two working groups.

In an article written in the context of IFLA's 60th anniversary, Klaus Plötz (1987), while acknowledging some 'meritorious publications', draws attention to the need for a 'comprehensive description' of the development of IFLA, and discusses some development stages of the Federation by focusing on five key years: 1927, 1947, 1967, 1977 and 1987. However, he lists only 11 sources.

For IFLA's 75th anniversary, a much less ambitious but nevertheless useful brochure was produced (Henry and Davis, 2002). It includes a brief history of IFLA (six pages), bringing earlier accounts up to date, which is followed by sections on IFLA's organisation and structure, and its activities. The latter section provides a useful brief description of each of IFLA's Core Activities – Advancement of Librarianship (in the Third World) Programme (ALP); Committee on Copyright and Other Legal Matters (CLM); Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE); Preservation and Access (PAC); Universal Availability of Publications (UAP) Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC; later Universal Bibliographic Control and International MARC); and Universal Dataflow and Telecommunications (UDT) – which played a significant role at the time. In the meantime, most of these have been terminated or have morphed into different entities. There is a rather-too-brief section on IFLA's publications, covering journals and series, followed by a list of the major publications of the Core Activities.

Wilhite (2012) includes a bibliography with approximately 140 references listed in alphabetical order by author. Most of them are to IFLA publications. However, while listing journals and books in which he found information about IFLA, he does not cite specific journal articles or book chapters. The *International Library Review* published an annual survey under the title ‘The year’s work in international librarianship’ (e.g. Aman, 1972). Festschriften, autobiographical works and general studies on international library and information work contain material ranging from reminiscences to scholarly articles relevant to IFLA’s history (e.g. Carroll, 1986; Knuth, 1994; Liebaers, 1980; Wormann, 1968). As mentioned earlier, a bibliography of publications on IFLA’s history can be found on IFLA’s website. Materials are grouped in some broad categories. It is especially useful in providing references to the more substantial publications that have appeared when IFLA sections celebrated special anniversaries (e.g. McCallum, 2003; Rovelstad, 1977; Van Swigchem, 1977). Substantial bibliographies can also be found in relevant books and articles. For example, the book by Alex Byrne (2007) on IFLA and freedom of information has an impressive bibliography, which is, of course, not limited to works about IFLA.

Various encyclopaedia entries have appeared about IFLA – for example, those in the various editions of the *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences* (Shimmon et al., 2010; Wijnstroom, 1974). IFLA is the main subject of Rayward’s (1994) entry on international library associations in the *Encyclopedia of Library History*, and IFLA also features in similar articles in other encyclopaedias (Rayward, 1980, 1986, 1993). It is worth looking at the entries in successive editions since they have different authors and different emphases. For the earlier history, the *Handbuch der Bibliothekswissenschaft*, a ‘handbook’ in the German encyclopaedic tradition, should be mentioned. A second edition of this work appeared after the Second World

War with two articles on international librarianship. The second of these (Breycha-Vauthier, 1961) is especially informative.

Peripheral sources

There is a great deal of material in which IFLA features only peripherally. What the researcher finds relevant depends on the topic of interest and how much material can be found on it. In some cases, a casual mention of IFLA may provide evidence of IFLA's involvement in an event or process, or of the presence of IFLA in a given country. Any Google search for IFLA or IFLA personalities turns up an almost unmanageable number of additional peripheral material.

Topics or themes in the published literature

This section offers an analysis of the more recent literature published about IFLA. It is based on an analysis of literature collected by Lor while working on a book about international and comparative librarianship (Lor, 2019). During the approximately 14 years of this project, starting in 2005 and continuing after the publication of the book, databases and Google have been scanned, the contents pages of the most likely library and information science journals have been regularly checked, and references in bibliographies have been followed up. The references are added to a Zotero database, which currently contains over 9300 references. Just over 2000 of these were cited in the book. Since it was initially intended to include a chapter on IFLA, everything about IFLA that was found was added to the database. Later, as the focus of the book shifted and the chapter on IFLA became a paragraph, items were added more selectively. This changed when IFLA's centenary was approaching and the history of IFLA

became the focus of this author's research. Currently, more comprehensive coverage of IFLA is aimed for, and efforts have been made to fill any lacunae, inter alia by using the 'snowball method'. This work is ongoing. For the earlier years, many items have proved difficult to access and require further work. For this reason, this analysis is limited to the period 2000–2022 inclusive. Even in this later period, coverage is not complete – new items keep turning up serendipitously and the coverage of non-English-language material is inadequate.

When the analysis was carried out, a search using the term 'IFLA' in the author's Zotero database yielded 1337 hits. However, many of these are not relevant. They occur simply because these items were published in the *IFLA Journal* and other IFLA publications. This analysis is limited to works *about* IFLA. Works published by IFLA are included only if they are *about* IFLA. The *Actes du Comité international des bibliothèques* and related series as listed by Wilhite (2012: 347) in his Appendix 2 have not been included.

Boolean searching is possible in Zotero using a wide range of fields, but it is somewhat cumbersome when used for multiple items. Therefore, all the hits were examined for relevance, leaving 543 items. Restricting the search to the period 2000–2022 left 294 items. For the purposes of this analysis, it is proposed that this corpus is adequate.

Types of publications

The types of publications are set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of publications included

Category	Number	Percentage
Periodical articles	165	56,1
Web pages, including blog posts	45	15,3
Book chapters	22	7,5
Conference papers & presentations	21	7,1
Books	19	6,5
Reports & miscellaneous documents	15	5,1
Substantial e-mail messages	7	2,4
TOTAL	294	100,0

Videos, infographics and items consisting predominantly of the texts of manifestos, statements, standards, and so on, were excluded. Web pages, blog posts and email messages were only included if they constituted reasonably substantial sources of information. Even with this limitation, it became clear that web-based documents constitute a significant and growing type of publication. The ongoing preservation of IFLA's websites will be critical for future historians.

Analysis of topics

The items that are added to the database are allocated alpha-numeric codes, which were developed in the early stages of the research for the book – for example:

Q IFLA

Q1 Origins and development

Q2 Goals and values

Q3 Membership and structure

Q4 Activities & contribution

The classification was extended as the database grew, but although it was useful in identifying material about IFLA, the a-priori classes proved inappropriate for the topical analysis. In a preliminary study reported elsewhere (Lor, 2022), a set of 16 topic tags was used. The tags were developed inductively – that is, on the basis of ‘literary warrant’ and not deductively using predetermined categories. For the present study, this set of tags was refined and extended to 25. All the items were then allocated tags in a fresh round. This was done for the full data set of 543 items, starting in 1927.

Three levels of topic tags were used. The same set of topics was used for all three levels, the difference being in the degree to which the tagged materials dealt with the topics. *Primary* tags were allocated to items that dealt exclusively or mainly with IFLA. Only one primary tag was allocated per item. No more than one *secondary* tag was allocated to items that did not deal mainly or exclusively with IFLA but in which useful information about IFLA was presented. Each item was given either a primary or a secondary tag. In addition, one or two *supplementary* tags could be allocated to cover additional topics in items to which primary or secondary tags had been allocated. The allocation of the topic tags is set out in Table 2. The tags are ranked by the frequency of the primary tags.

Table 2: Topic tags allocated to literature about IFLA (ranked by frequency of primary tags)

Topic	Primary tags	All tags (includes. Secondary & supplementary tags)
Core Activities (incl. other strategic units)	36	53
Conferences/Congresses	35	38
Statements, manifestos, guidelines (about)	21	32
Advocacy	14	24
Publications (about)	14	18
Sections, SIGs & Professional units; divisions	12	23
Development of LIS & involvement in developing countries	12	19
SDGs and MDGs	12	16
Countries (participation of/relations with countries & regions	11	26
Standards (about)	11	14
WSIS (IFLA's involvement in the World Summit on the Information Society)	11	14
Biography (of IFLA leaders & personalities)	11	11
History	7	12
Regional offices	7	7
General	6	7
UNESCO (Relations with)	5	18
Relations with allied bodies, funders, sponsors, etc.	4	13
Management & organisation	4	5
Bibliography (of IFLA)	3	4
Relief (Disaster prevention & relief; preservation of heritage)	3	3
Political issues	1	2
Cooperation (among libraries, with other bodies)	0	2
FID (Relations with)	0	1
League of Nations (Relations with)	0	0
Secretariat	0	0
TOTAL	240	362

NOTE: Fifty-four of the 294 items were not allocated primary tags. Since some 122 items were

allocated more than one tag, the total number of tags allocated is 362.

Some notes on these categories are in order.

- ‘Cooperation’ covers cooperative relations among libraries and of libraries with other bodies, not IFLA’s cooperation with other bodies, which is covered under ‘Relations’, ‘FID’ and ‘UNESCO’.
- ‘Conferences/congresses’ includes many reports on specific conferences by participants, including first-timers and grant recipients.
- ‘Core Activities’ includes not only the original seven Core Activities (ALP, CLM, FAIFE, PAC, UAP, UBC and UDT) but also later strategic programmes and committees, such as the IFLA-Conference of Directors of National Libraries Alliance for Bibliographic Standards, Building Strong Library Associations and the Committee on Standards.
- IFLA’s relations with FID, now defunct, were an important issue until FID’s demise in 2001–2002.
- ‘Management’ covers IFLA’s organisational structure, processes and management issues.
- ‘Political issues’ covers the impact of international politics on IFLA. During the Cold War period, this was a significant topic. After the Cold War, it became less prominent, but we may expect it to reappear.
- ‘Publications’ only covers items *about* the publications, such as their history, analysis and evaluation.
- ‘Relations with allied bodies, funders, sponsors, etc.’ includes items dealing with IFLA’s relations with other ‘peak bodies’, such as the International Publishers

Association, the International Board on Books for Young People and the International Council on Archives.

- ‘Statements, manifestos, guidelines’ does not include these publications as such, but only items *about* them – for example, how they were developed, disseminated and received by the profession. The same applies to ‘Standards’. The borderline between statements and standards is not always clear. The ‘Standards’ tag was applied to the more technical and quantitative items.
- ‘Sustainable Development Goals and Millennium Development Goals’ refers to IFLA’s involvement in these Goals.

Clustered at the foot of Table 2 are topics that occurred seldom or not at all during the period 2000–2002, such as ‘Political issues’, ‘Cooperation’ and ‘FID’, which received more attention in earlier periods. These tags have been retained in the table with a view to potential future comparisons with those earlier periods. The earlier preliminary study (Lor, 2022) does not offer a breakdown by period.

Themes

To gain a more coherent view of the field, it is helpful to consolidate the topics listed in Table 2 into a smaller number of broader themes based on the content of the tagged items. Some broad themes emerge readily; others are more difficult to delimit:

1. *Advocacy* for libraries and the profession: external communication to protect professional turf and increase influence. Topics: Advocacy, Cooperation, FID, League

of Nations, Relations, Sustainable Development Goals and Millennium Development Goals, UNESCO, World Summit on the Information Society (87 tags).

2. *Professional services* aimed at actual or potential library users anywhere. Topics: Development, Relief (22 tags).
3. *Professional development* of members and the profession generally. Topics: Conferences, Regional offices, Sections (68 tags).
4. *Multi-purpose* communication & initiatives. These serve themes 1, 2, and 3 to a greater or lesser extent and cannot be incorporated in those themes. Topics: Core Activities, Publications, Standards, Statements (117 tags).
5. *Organisational needs* (self-understanding, maintenance, growth, survival). Topics: Bibliography, Biography, Countries, General, History, Management, Politics (67 tags).

It is interesting to compare these themes with frameworks for the study of organisations – for example, those of Schein (2011) and Holmes (2019). In the study referred to earlier (Lor, 2022), a comment by Schein served as a point of departure for a framework. He wrote that all organisations ‘have to deal with two fundamental sets of issues – external adaptation and internal integration’ (Schein, 2011: 314). On this basis, we might distinguish two broad areas: (a) IFLA’s external environment and how it responds to it and (b) how IFLA conceptualises and organises itself. An alternative schema can be derived from the theory of ‘organisational logics’ in ‘hybrid organisations’, as discussed by Holmes (2019). Professional associations can be regarded as ‘hybrid organisations’ because they must meet the needs of diverse stakeholders. This implies diverse ‘institutional logics that set out the orientation of teams and acceptable behaviour patterns’ (Holmes, 2019: 77). The logics can be summarised as follows:

1. The *membership logic* is concerned with responding to the needs of the association's members, speaking on their behalf, executing their will, and dealing with them as a diverse collective.
2. The *professional logic* is concerned with strategies to preserve the association's control over a professional field, and the improvement of the occupational prestige and status of its members. This includes the "learned society function" of creating and curating professional knowledge and establishing standards.
3. The *public logic* is concerned with the benefit, information, engagement and protection of the public, including the clients served by the association's members.
4. The *organisational logic*, concerned with the running of the organisation, dealing with risk, and managing risk, and managing the demands of employees and volunteers (adapted from Holmes, 2019: 78).

This provides an explanatory framework for the list of themes developed above. Different organisations will give different weight to the four logics. IFLA is an international non-governmental organisation that needs to reconcile the requirements of a very diverse, geographically distributed membership; seeks to promote excellent professional practice in the interests of library users and potential users worldwide; and needs to survive as a viable organisation. Its international role adds a level of complexity to the four logics proposed by Holmes.

Conceptual frameworks

By far the majority of the items examined for this article were straightforward, bland and uncritical narrative accounts. The historical contributions were mainly descriptions of events

and developments in a roughly chronological order, or narratives rich in anecdote. In the literature published during 2000–2022, only 15 items were of interest in terms of *methodology*. The authors of these contributions had applied various forms of literature, content, rhetorical and bibliometric analysis; explicit comparative methods; and formal programme impact assessments. There were also 12 items of a *critical and evaluative* nature, including some dealing with the recent management problems at IFLA headquarters, critical and evaluative assessments of IFLA standards and guidelines, critical views of IFLA conferences, and critiques of IFLA’s stance on human rights and social justice. In only two cases were explicit ideological stances (Marxist and post-colonial) evident. The published literature on IFLA is largely devoid of methodological rigour. Explicit research paradigms are hardly ever mentioned. Neither is there any evidence of the use of conceptual frameworks from other social science disciplines.

Historical research should not be undertaken in a theoretical void. A suitable theoretical framework adds value, especially in the case of more ambitious contributions. A great deal has been written on the theory of organisations, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and international non-governmental organisations in the context of international relations, development theory, the relationship between civil society and other political-economic actors, globalisation, neo-liberal capitalism, gender studies, and so on. At the very least, we should not forget the wider context of library and information history as, for example, in the work of Black (e.g. Black, 1998; Black and Mak, 2019) and Rayward (e.g. 1996, 2014). This varied literature is sure to suggest useful theoretical frameworks for the historiography of IFLA.

Conclusion

There is no lack of material awaiting IFLA's historians. The approaching IFLA centenary presents an opportune time for historians to delve into IFLA's history, on which a scholarly monograph is being planned. A call for chapter proposals, which at the time of writing is being developed, will show that many interesting and challenging themes have already been identified. It is hoped that this article will help generate interest and prompt IFLA members to participate in the centennial projects of IFLA's Library History Special Interest Group, and contribute to the historiography of IFLA.

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Footnotes

<https://www.ifla.org/g/library-history/projects/>

1. The IFLA member directories appeared under various names, in various formats and with varying periodicity from 1931. The last edition found in IFLA's archive is for 2002–2003. Presumably, the costs of printing and distribution, combined with European Union and/or Dutch legislation on privacy, put an end to it.
2. A simple list of IFLA annual reports since 2001, roughly in reverse chronological order, can be found at <https://www.ifla.org/annual-report/>
3. For the World Report Series, see <https://www.ifla.org/publications/ifla-faife-world-report-series/>. For the Trend Reports, see <https://trends.ifla.org>
4. See <https://www.ifla.org/resources/>
5. For a list of the variously termed IFLA sessions, conferences and congresses from 1928 to 2012, see Wilhite's (2012: 348–350) Appendix 3, 'Chart of sessions'. A list of these events from 1928 to the current year (2023 at time of writing) is at <https://www.ifla.org/past-ifla-congresses/>. Here, there are clickable links for access to the conferences' websites and documentation.
6. The Sage Journals website for the *IFLA Journal* is at <https://journals.sagepub.com/loi/ifl> and the IFLA websites are at <https://www.ifla.org/ifla-journal/> (from 2003 to the current issue) and <https://www.ifla.org/ifla-journal-old-archive/> (from 1993 to 2002, IFLA's 'Old archive').
7. See <https://www.ifla.org/ifla-publications-series>
8. See <https://www.ifla.org/advisory-committees/>
9. See <https://www.ifla.org/g/cataloguing/publications-list/>
10. See <https://www.ifla.org/g/cataloguing/section-archive-2/>
11. See <https://www.ifla.org/g/cataloguing/newsletter/>. Note that the links cited here are from the previous iteration of IFLA's website. On the latest website, it has become more difficult to locate the professional units of IFLA.
12. See <http://library.ifla.org/>
13. See <https://www.ifla.org/history-publications/>

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