

EDITORIAL

This issue of the *Art Libraries Journal* includes three articles about associations or groups of art libraries. One of these marks the launch of the Japan Art Documentation Society, to which we send our congratulations and best wishes. Another tells briefly of co-operation between art libraries in Madrid: could this commendable initiative, like the activities of art librarians in Florence, lead to the growth of a national association or network? Let us hope so. The third article celebrates the first five years of ARLIS Norge. Each of these three enterprises owes its original inspiration, at least in part, to the activities of the IFLA Section of Art Libraries, which functions, in part, as an international association of associations of art libraries (and of art libraries themselves, and art librarians). ARLIS Norge, since its inception and throughout its first five years, has demonstrated an impressive commitment to international co-operation and to the IFLA Section of Art Libraries.

For both new and smaller art librarians' associations, raising funds to support their activities can be a major problem, all the more so if those activities are to include participation in international events and in the work of the IFLA Section of Art Libraries. The costs of sending representatives to other countries include not only the costs of travel, but also, of accommodation and, very often, conference fees also. While events organised by the IFLA Section of Art Libraries are open to all, and are generally kept as inexpensive as possible, to participate in all of the Art Section's events at the annual IFLA conference involves payment of the IFLA conference fee plus the costs of a lengthy stay of up to ten days. And, while the Section's Standing Committee meetings are traditionally 'open', those organisations, notably art librarians' associations but also libraries, which wish to be officially represented on the Standing Committee by a voting member, must have joined IFLA as Association or (a cheaper alternative which some associations have opted for) Institutional Members – unless they can persuade their national library association or some other IFLA member organisation to take them under its wing and to nominate to the Section's Standing Committee on their behalf. The current IFLA membership rate for Institutional Membership is 525 Dutch guilders per annum. While well within the budget of larger organisations, this represents a very considerable sum for

smaller, and more specialised, associations to find.

Recently ARLIS/ANZ – a relatively small body in spite of its vast geographical base – has reluctantly decided that it can no longer afford to remain an IFLA member. Ironically, this decision comes soon after the IFLA Conference at Sydney, where ARLIS/ANZ members contributed a great deal to the successful meetings of the Section of Art Libraries; moreover, it comes at a time when a member (and former Chair) of ARLIS/ANZ, Margaret Shaw, is concluding a highly successful term of office as Chair of the IFLA Section of Art Libraries. ARLIS/ANZ, and Margaret Shaw, have asked IFLA to consider the financial burden that IFLA membership imposes on bodies, and libraries, whose eagerness to support IFLA is not matched by their monetary resources. Too much so for its own good, IFLA is the creature of library bosses for whom international conferences mean luxury hotels and a break from routine at the very height of the season when prices are peaking; to too great an extent, IFLA is an association of large national associations which are content to devote money to, for the most part, relatively few representatives (their own officials; library bosses; the same faces year after year). While token assistance may be given to developing countries, or to a limited number of individuals who would otherwise be unable to attend, it remains true that IFLA and its conferences are shaped by the expectations of the affluent and the influential, in a way which effectively discriminates against poorer countries, specialised groups within the library profession (such as art librarians), modest and specialised libraries, and individuals, including younger librarians, and specialists, not blessed with 'status'.

Internationalism, inevitably, is costly; it ought not to be more costly than is necessary; not least, it should not adopt as its norm the profligacy and extravagance of 'Western' lifestyles. IFLA has provided the best available superstructure to support the growth of internationalism among art librarians; IFLA's small staff, the Division of Special Libraries, and many individuals associated with IFLA, have been more than helpful; the ever maturing relationship between art librarianship and IFLA is something which it would be folly to sever prematurely, if ever. For the sake of the continuing of this relationship, for the benefit of art librarianship worldwide, but also, for its (IFLA's) own well-being, the *Art*

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Libraries Journal urges IFLA to give serious consideration to the case of ARLIS/ANZ, and at the same time to look again at the Professional Resolution submitted by the Section of Art Libraries in 1986. This Resolution invited IFLA to 'scrutinise the whole problem of financial obstacles to participation in IFLA' and to counter 'any tendency for the participation of individuals, institutions, or countries to be discouraged or prevented'.¹ Finally, IFLA must be sensitive to the fact that, for those smaller groups who are eager to play their part, not only financial considerations but also certain of IFLA's regulations and procedures can represent disproportionately formidable obstacles.

References.

1. The full text of this Resolution can be found in the *IFLA Section of Art Libraries Newsletter* no. 14 Fall 1986.
2. Fredriksson, Inger. 'Avstängt, instängt, feltänkt - om Konstbibliotekets nya inriktning'. *ARLIS NORDEN INFO* 1988 no.2 p.11-13. (I would be happy to send a copy of an English translation of this article to any reader who would like one. - *Editor*).