



A global view of library associations for students and new librarians

A global view
of library
associations

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Abstract

Purpose – To guide students' thinking about joining professional associations.

Design/methodology/approach – A few representative professional organizations are explored. Aspects such as organizational structure, history, culture, professional focus, and size are discussed.

Findings – Many more professional associations exist and encourage student participation than most students are aware of when they enter the profession.

Practical implications – Students can compare professional associations to find those most suited to their professional interests. These may not be the most local or well known national organizations.

Originality/value – This is an attempt to help students recognize that professional organizations exist regardless of their niche interest, and despite the larger and more general associations that may be given local emphasis.

Keywords Librarians, Professional associations, Students, Africa, Bulgaria

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

In many nations librarians have joined together to form professional associations. Librarianship has many associations from which the new professional may choose. Often, however, students are drawn to their national library association and do not feel they have a choice about which association to join. Because this is usually the most prominent association, students hear about it and have a high likelihood of joining without considering other associations that may better meet their needs or interests. Students and new librarians who look beyond their national associations are often confused or overwhelmed by the plethora of professional organizations that they might join. How do students or new librarians choose whether to become a member of a professional association, and then select which association best meets their needs? The aim of this paper is to provide information that will guide a student's thinking about associations. Aspects they might consider include the association's history, culture, professional focus, organizational structure, and size. These factors are discussed here so students may see the value learning more about an association before they decide to become involved.

Although eager for professional involvement these potential new members quickly see that some organizations are very focused, such as the Special Libraries Association (SLA, 2005) or the North American Serials Interest Group (NASIG, 2005). Or they discover that the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2005) or the International Reading Association (IRA, 2005) would require expensive travel to attend their major conferences. Perhaps they are interested in



a large organization, but also fear that to join the American Library Association (ALA, 2005) without someone to steer them through the intricate network of divisions, roundtables, interest groups, and committees would be confusing and frustrating.

Associations are recognized as a definitive aspect of a profession by trait theory, a popular approach to defining professions (Rubin, 2000). Membership, however, is strictly voluntary and represents a conscious choice to join an association that an individual believes will best reflect specific professional interests (Winter, 1988).

The scope of this paper is to consider organizational aspects, such as structure, of a few library or librarian associations. These groups will simply be termed library associations for clarity. One source for discovery of library associations is the Internet Directory of International Library Organizations at *Internet Library for Librarians*, a portal of InfoWorks Technology Company that is, “designed for librarians to locate internet resources related to their profession” (www.itcompany.com/info retriever/) and has been in existence since 1994. Library Organizations: International is available at: www.itcompany.com/info retriever/assn_oth.htm. Another listing of library organizations can be found in Table I.

No attempt is made to include or address consortia as professional organizations in this paper. Nor is any focus given to national or state libraries even though many of these governmental groups may also create venues for discussions, professional education, and other roles of the associations that are reviewed here. Several models of successful associations will be discussed, including implications arising from their varied structures. Possibilities about why particular structures evolved into effective organizations will also be considered.

Examples of organizations from different cultures across the globe are included here. The examples illustrate a variety of organizational structures. Also the similarities and differences, and strengths and weaknesses of these associations are considered. Despite their cultural and structural differences, most library organizations address concerns that are common to librarians everywhere. It is this focus on important common issues that allows organizations to create a unifying sense of the profession regardless of geographic and political borders. It is exciting to learn how diverse library associations facilitate solutions to common professional problems. Solis, in her recounting of the 70th IFLA Conference in Buenos Aires, says that,

It was truly an inspiring experience to be in the company of so many librarians who, although facing unique challenges in their own libraries, all share a belief that access to information and education can change lives and have a positive effect on their communities (Solis, 2005, p. 58).

Given the huge spectrum of economic, political, geographic, and other parameters influencing specific individual locations, library associations are excellent problem solving units that manage effectively with available local resources.

Professional associations

Professionals were originally subject to the authority of powerful patrons. The professionals' subsequent demand for autonomy is credited as a significant factor in the rise of professional associations. Possibly rooted in the medieval guild organizations, contemporary professional associations provide members with a professional identity, enforce educational standards and accredit the institutions that

AAIL	American Association for Artificial Intelligence
AALL	American Association of Law Libraries
AASL	American Association of School Libraries
ACL	Association of Christian Librarians
ACM	Association of Computing Machinery
AIIP	Association of Independent Information Professionals
AILA	American Indian Librarians Association
AJL	Association of Jewish Librarians
ALA	American Library Association
AMIA	American Medical Informatics Association
APALA	Asian Pacific American Libraries Association
ARL	Association of Research Libraries
ARLIS	Art Libraries Society (North America)
ARMA	American Records Management Association
ASCD	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
ASCLA	Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies
ASIS	American Society of Information Science
ASIST	American Society for Information in Science and Technology
ATLA	American Theological Library Association
CALA	Chinese American Librarians Association
CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
CLA	Canadian Library Association
CSNA	Classification Society of North America
EFA	Editorial Freelancers Association
GIS	Geoscience Information Society
IAALD	International Association of Agricultural Information Specialists
IAML	International Association of Music Libraries
IASL	International Association of School Librarianship
IBL	Information Bridges International
IEEE	Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, Inc.
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
ILA	Internet Library Association
IRA	International Reading Association
MEDLA	Medical Librarians Association
MLA	Music Library Association
NASIG	North American Serials Interest Group
NASLIN	North American Sport Library Network
PLG	Progressive Librarians Guild
RLG	Research Libraries Group
SAA	Society of American Archivists
SCIP	Society of Competitive Intelligence Professionals
SGA	Support Group for Information Architecture – Student

Table I.
Library related
organizations

provide the education, enforce standards of conduct, make continuing education available, organize conferences so that issues and research may be discussed, promote scholarship that advances the knowledge base, and provide for the dissemination of research and professional information through various publications (Rubin, 2000; Winter, 1988).

Rubin (2000) also says that because the trait view of professions has received serious criticism, he believes that the control model discussed by Winter (1988) is a more appropriate view. At the basis of the control model is the concept that a

profession is not a type of occupation but a set of procedures through which it exerts its authority by exercising control over the occupational practitioners (Winter, 1988). Though Winter (1988) believes that professions more closely resemble unions because they are forms of control, the professional control model emphasizes intellectual credentials in the form of advanced degrees while unionized control emphasizes manual dexterity and apprenticeship acquired skills.

A primary activity of professional associations is to create a variety of venues for the discussion of issues. There are many ways a student or new librarian can become involved in professional associations. It is not mandatory for new members to attend conferences, especially when initially learning about a group. Many associations (some are mentioned below) have web sites that give background information and listservs or newsletters that allow new member participation. Also smaller local groups (chapters or branches) of the main association may have smaller meetings that are more comfortable for someone new to the profession. New colleagues and seasoned professionals gather virtually on listservs, confer in person at conferences and meetings, communicate intra-organizationally through committee groups, and publish newsletters and other printed material for the membership and profession at large. These venues allow librarians to recognize concerns and seek solutions to professional problems, an important ingredient of professional organizations.

Another function of professional organizations is the setting and monitoring of professional standards. Furthermore, the professional organization is instrumental in creating a professional culture as a source of shared orientation toward work (Winter, 1988). Librarianship includes all facets of the profession so that technical or bibliographic changes are monitored and discussed, as well as concerns with the public such as interlibrary loan systems or automated circulation. Because the profession's scope is broadly inclusive – with academic, public, school, and special libraries – there are many corresponding specialized associations. Issues in librarianship are often viewed from the local perspective, but may also be relevant to the profession globally. On a global scale library associations facilitate communication at many levels, and provide monitoring of professional practices and standards for all librarians.

Library associations

Library associations play important roles by influencing government policy and developing professional policies and standards (Dowling, 2001; Moore, 2001). The role that these professional organizations take, for example, “to think about the likely evolution of librarian’s work and to ask what the consequences of that evolution might be for the occupation” (Abbott, 1998a) is a valid role of library associations. Because library associations have either full-time paid staff or non-paid elected officers, Scepanski and Wells discuss an important organizational concern. Specifically, they address the role of organizational staff and are concerned:

... about the roles that organization staff members play in formulating policy, about their responsibility for the overall viability and direction of these organizations, and about their relationships with governing boards and member volunteers (Scepanski and Wells, 1997, p. 245).

It is important to recognize that perspectives of paid staff may not transfer well to working library environments in academic, special, or public library settings.

Professional associations that have no paid staff and use the volunteer services of professional librarians are more tuned to daily issues in librarianship, while large organizations with paid staff are more likely to be tuned to organizational details, legal concerns, or budgets. There is a wide gap between the line employee (librarian) and the staff employee (accountant, attorney) in professional library associations. Mintzberg (1979) distinguishes the terms “line” and “staff” by explaining that, “in theory line positions had formal authority to make decisions, while staff positions did not; they merely advised those who did” (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 21). The clerical skills of a paid staffer are quite different than the professional librarian’s skills. Later, Mintzberg describes that:

One need is to coordinate the work of professionals with that of support staffers. The professionals want to give the orders. But that can catch the support staffers between the vertical power of line authority and the horizontal power of professional expertise (Mintzberg, 1989, p. 189).

These varied skill sets are likely to cause dissatisfaction with organizational management styles and expected outcomes when the two groups interact (Scepanski and Wells, 1997). Working librarians who serve as volunteer officers in professional associations have a much better grasp of daily concerns than paid association staffers who do not have daily librarianship experience. Even though professional associations have levels of authority and inequalities of status, association levels of authority are much less dominant than in contemporary work settings; consequently practitioners have an opportunity for the type of participation in associations that may not be attainable in their workplace (Winter, 1988). The library association is influential in government policy development, legislation, changes in the profession, public perception of the profession, and the structure and policy of the organization itself. The broad range of images, influences, and policies that an active association can affect emphasizes the value of the organization to its membership and the profession on a global scale.

Abbott (1998b, p. 431) cogently puts this realization in place when he says that, “the sociology of professions has yet to catch up with the wildly dynamic world of contemporary librarianship”. Simply put, it is the individuals who are active and involved in library associations that form the future vision for the profession, create policy, and influence librarianship in countless ways beyond the local level. Local library associations across the globe may adapt their roles because they are influenced by distant professional views; effective techniques, methods, or solutions that may help solve problems in their own local situation. The student or new librarian may lack the tacit knowledge of the organization or profession, but can more than make up for that naivety because they have the most current academic awareness available in this dynamically changing profession. It becomes incumbent upon associational leaders to genuinely welcome new professionals, just as it demands willingness of the new professional to accept the challenge of moving beyond a student role to one of professionalism in a public forum.

A global library association

The IFLA (2005) is the quintessential library association in the sense that its membership is primarily composed of representatives from other library associations

and institutions across the globe. It is a model organization for effective consideration and resolution of library concerns. It is significant that IFLA provides an annual forum – and efficient organizational infrastructure – for a membership of approximately 1,700 who represent librarianship in more than 155 nations (www.ifla.org). The diversity of this globally-scaled organization, with offices in The Netherlands, Senegal, Thailand, and Brazil, creates a dynamic that is much more evident than is found in many smaller more homogenous localized organizations. While the issues, concerns, or topics may be essentially the same for the IFLA membership and members of more localized associations, the breadth of IFLA membership backgrounds brings a level of culturally and economically based critical thinking that is essentially unsurpassed.

While the majority of IFLA members are elected by and representative of local organizations, there is another path to membership. The student or new librarian who has a strong interest in international librarianship may join IFLA as a personal member. The personal member does not represent another organization and is, therefore, not accorded voting privileges. However, the personal member may participate in the Annual Conference, its sessions and related activities, cultural events, and professional development. The personal member receives the *IFLA Journal*, and may elect to receive the IFLA monograph series published by Sage. This side door to IFLA membership allows a new librarian immediate and direct exposure to a wide range of international perspectives.

National library associations

The ALA is a national organization with significant influence. ALA has a divisional organizational structure that is strongly supported by both a paid staff and governing groups. The organizational structure has a strong vertical orientation. This is, in part, because it is an effective means of intra-organizational communication for so many sub-groups, and when such a large number of people are involved. Having organizationally autonomous groups allows ALA members to be involved more specifically with their personal interests. Many other groups are recognized as affiliates of the ALA general structure. These are, for example, ProLiteracy Worldwide (2005), Beta Phi Mu (2005), REFORMA (2005), and Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) (2005). Because these groups are affiliated with ALA they often link their meetings or conferences to ALA scheduled activities.

The majority of members fit into an area of the divisional structure. As described on the web site under “Our Organization”:

ALA is home to eleven membership divisions, each focused on a type of library or type of library function. It also includes round tables, groups of members “interested in the same field of librarianship not within the scope of any division”. A network of affiliates, chapters and other organizations enables ALA to reach a broad audience (www.ala.org).

Overall membership is more than 60,000; one of the membership categories is for students. Membership in ALA provides many benefits. The huge size of the membership allows peripheral benefits such as reduced car rental fees or health insurance at reduced rates. Members may select roundtables, divisions, or other interest groups when paying annual dues. In addition to individual selected benefits, members also automatically receive *American Libraries* magazine, *Cognotes* reports, newsletters, and other division publications.

Some might consider the influence of ALA an intangible benefit. For example, an ALA office of lobbyists in Washington, DC monitors legislation and political events – both influencing legislators and reporting to membership. The committee on Intellectual Freedom monitors concerns and encourages the membership to influence their legislators when issues arise. It is difficult to assign a monetary value to this kind of organizational benefit.

ALA is a huge organization of more than 60,000 members. It is probably the largest library organization in existence, compared to the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP, 2005) in the UK with its 23,000 members (www.cilip.org.uk), or the SLA with almost 7,000 members representing about a dozen nations (www.sla.org). The Canadian Library Association (CLA, 2005) (www.cla.ca) is a divisional and committee structured organization with approximately 2,500 members. One of the three types of membership is the Student Membership. Many CLA benefits are extended to student members. The ALA membership – which includes a small percentage of international members – far exceeds the 1,700 of IFLA who represent 155 nations. The size of ALA is overwhelming to some members and may be discouraging to some prospective members. However, it is this large scale of operations that allows ALA to set standards for library school accreditation, lobby government officials, provide groups for countless special interest issues in librarianship, and extend a wealth of scholarship and grant funding to support member projects. Despite any discouragement to new members who may want to work on committees, be involved in divisions, or serve in elected office it is the inherent clout of such a large group that makes ALA an effective leader for other associations across the globe, and a pervading influence on librarianship.

The CILIP is the leading UK library association. Organizationally, CILIP is governed by its Council, managed by its Executive Board, and has committees that organize and implement activities. This formal hierarchy is an effective arrangement. Many members may be involved, but the large number of participants does not prevent efficient management of humans, resources, programs, or services. Members may be elected to serve in a variety of capacities. CILIP has 26 special interest groups that allow students to engage in the professional conversation of specific topics in librarianship.

CILIP has a student membership category for those who are enrolled in CILIP accredited programs of study. Student members may participate at many levels, and are eligible for member benefits. Valuable resources for student members include formal networking, career development, and free online access to select library and information science journals.

The CILIP web site is clearly organized and informative. It includes information about all aspects of the organization, including member benefits, conferences, news, and grants. The “About CILIP” section of the web site describes CILIP as:

The leading professional body for librarians, information specialists and knowledge managers, with up to 23,000 members working in all sectors, including business and industry, science and technology, further and higher education, schools, local and central government, the health service, the voluntary sector, national and public libraries (www.cilip.org.uk)

This group of professionals is an excellent source of guidance for students, and a leading association for librarianship throughout Western Europe.

All three of these organizations – IFLA, ALA, and CILIP – are very influential globally. Each organization sets professional standards and engages members of the profession in meaningful ways. Their organizational strengths allow them to effect large scale policies and practices, and in doing that they exert influence on smaller or more isolated associations that are addressing similar professional concerns.

Library associations with strong regional influences

An excellent example of a successful regional library association is the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA, 2005). This is the leading South African library association; it also has important influence on librarianship in nations across sub-Saharan Africa. LIASA is hierarchically arranged, and according to former board member Van Zijl (2005), is open to any interested librarians. It has a national slate of officers elected for two-year terms by all voting members. LIASA contributes effectively to the profession of librarianship. There are ten Branches in the LIASA structure. The branches are located in ten areas of South Africa; they enhance the vitality of the organization through this decentralization. Each branch has officers and interest group conveners. LIASA authorizes ten interest groups, they are:

- (1) LIASA Acquisitions Interest Group (LACIG)
- (2) LIASA Special Libraries Interest Group (LiSLIG)
- (3) Higher Education Interest Group
- (4) Interlending Interest Group
- (5) Interest Group for Bibliographic Standards (IGBIS)
- (6) Library and Communication Technology
- (7) Public and Community Libraries Interest Group
- (8) Research, Education and Training Interest Group (RETIG)
- (9) School Libraries Interest Group
- (10) Support Staff Interest Group.

These groups are subordinate to the main LIASA structure and governance, including its Constitution. While membership is possible for a librarian in only an interest group – they need not be a member of the larger organization – it is unusual because the general structure is vertically integrated between the main and subordinate groups for maximum communication and efficient problem solving.

Interest group meetings are held at the LIASA Conference annually each September. Each year these conferences are held in a different location in South Africa; many areas of the country are included. Some interest groups hold pre-conferences for training and skill development. By allowing a degree of interest group and branch autonomy, the Constitutional right of LIASA members to form new interest groups or subgroups in geographic areas is enhanced. These groups are active and effective in their area of specialization. For example, the Acquisitions Interest Group (LACIG) has convened three annual conferences, the Southern African Library Acquisitions Conference (SALAC), with a variety of speakers and exhibitors. All interest groups operate under the same democratic principles of LIASA.

In addition to the conference and interest groups, an excellent slate of critical issues is addressed in ongoing Continuing Education and Professional Development (CEPD)

programs. Another important aspect of LIASA is the varied and successful communication that is disseminated. It is important to recognize that what was observed as a weakness (with faulty links and poor layout) just a year ago is now a definite strength: the LIASA web site (www.liasa.org.za).

This excellent web site is clearly and aesthetically designed, contains both current and archived information, and includes both fundamental organizational information (such as Constitutional governance) as well as a Gallery which celebrates LIASA achievements. It is a good contemporary communication tool that is available globally. Importantly, especially given current infrastructure development in sub-Saharan Africa, this is not the only effective communication LIASA has developed. The web site provides a comprehensive view of the organization, but is just one means of communication from LIASA to constituent groups; it is a good supplement to the paper publications and electronic Listserv groups. As explained on the web site:

LIASA (2005) offers its members three different publications as a means to communicate management decisions, share ideas between branches as well as communicate issues relating to career advancement and development (www.liasa.org.za).

The three publications are:

- (1) *South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science*
- (2) *LIASA-In-Touch*
- (3) *LIASA News*

These range in scope and format from a scholarly peer-reviewed journal, to a magazine which includes advertising of new library products, and finally to a newsletter with current organizational topics. The journal and magazine each have a circulation of about 2,000 and readership in South Africa of about 5,000. The variety of formats and informational content allows members to access printed information that suits their individual needs and interests.

LIASA is an effective organization. Despite its geographic distance from Europe and North America, this organization builds bridges across geographic differences. International speakers from the distant north are regularly included in programs and conferences. Equally important is the inclusiveness of this national organization in its sub-Saharan location. Because of their strong influence on librarians in Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana, Swaziland, Mozambique, and other areas of Africa LIASA is an effective organization for Southern Africa and the entire continent.

Another example of an effective organization is the Union of Library and Information Officers (ULISO, 2005) in the Eastern European nation of Bulgaria. This very centralized group is the only library association in Bulgaria. Even with 14 regional branches to integrate various areas of the nation, the organizational authority rests with the centralized Executive Board. ULISO has a flat organizational structure with relatively few sub-groups and a limited number of officers. This is a structure that works well given the membership size (approximately 600) and the limited geographic area (almost 111,000 km²) of the nation. Bulgarian librarians form a close profession; they know one another and work well together regardless of the type of library each individual represents.

Despite an unsuccessful (1996-1997) attempt by the Ministry of Culture to further centralize Bulgarian librarians into a quasi-governmental group, ULISO continues as

the most effective association for librarians. In the words of recent Board Member, Anna Popova, ULISO attracted, “members from all types of libraries, gained their trust and proved to be the biggest, and the main professional organization in Bulgaria” (Popova, 2005). Although consortia (Bulgarian Information Consortia) and other organizations (Organization of Academic Libraries) exist, these are not “accepted as alternatives of ULISO” says Popova (2005). The organizational structure of ULISO allows any librarians to pay dues and hold membership:

- institutional members, such as the Organization of Academic Libraries;
- individual librarian members; and
- student members.

Membership is not restricted. During the past year a new section was established for young librarians who are entering the profession: Y!LIB.

Several working groups address professional concerns of Bulgarian librarians, such as one group that is drafting new Library Law, and another that is working toward Cooperative Cataloging.

There is a tradition, since 1991, for ULISO to hold an annual conference where papers and presentations about library theory and practice are shared. Every two years, at a congress following the annual conference, board members are elected for two-year terms. A board member may not serve more than two consecutive terms. A part-time office secretary is the only paid staff. All ULISO board members give their time freely to the organization.

A definite ULISO strength is a typical one for librarians: collaboration! It is refreshing for a national organization to be deeply involved in professional partnerships. ULISO partnered with the Library School at the University of Sofia “St Kliment Ohridski” to establish its Center for Continuing Education. This partnership is further sponsored by the Open Society Library Program in Eastern Europe. The Center for Continuing Education provides continuing professional education for librarians across Bulgaria and has been actively bringing regional and international guest speakers since 2001. Another active program for continuing professional development, the Globenet series of Sofia Conferences (<http://slim.emporia.edu/globenet/globenet.htm>), has been a partnership between the library schools at the University of Sofia “St Kliment Ohridski” and Emporia State University, and has had significant support and participation from ULISO and its members. Other partnerships include:

- ABLE (American Bulgarian Library Exchange) (ABLE, 2005) www.lib.bg/ABLE.htm;
- PULMAN (Public Libraries Mobilizing Advanced Networks) (PULMAN, 2005) www.pulmanweb.org; and
- CALIMERA (European Commission IST Programme) (CALIMERA, 2005) <http://calimera.org/default.aspx>.

These collaborative partnerships allow Bulgarian librarians to contribute to the most advanced American and European library initiatives, illustrating how smaller regional or national associations may genuinely affect the discourse and developments of major international bodies and their projects.

Another important aspect of ULISO is how they disseminate information. The web site (www.lib.bg) is arranged well, containing core information such as goals, code of ethics, sponsors, executive board, continuing education, and more. Good use is made of beautiful fifteenth century illuminated pages from the National Library collection. The contrasting use of these historical pages with contemporary photos adds visual and aesthetic appeal to the site.

In addition to the web site, printed materials for members include:

- annual report;
- bulletin (issued every six months); and
- circular newsletters.

All of the printed documents also are supplemented with a listserv (BLA-BUL) that facilitates discussion of professional development issues, or notices to the membership.

It is significant that ULISO, like many other library associations across the globe, provides these conferences and programs, and disseminates information to the membership using volunteer librarians. These are competent professionals who work for the good of librarianship in Bulgaria, but have a much wider influence on the profession and how others perceive librarianship than they themselves may realize. In this information age it is difficult to assess who may be viewing web sites, who may be learning about librarianship, and who may be enticed into a profession that needs the skills, new ideas, and diverse cultural background that epitomize global information sharing.

Both LIASA and ULISO influence librarianship beyond their national borders. Librarians in neighbouring countries of Southern Africa or Eastern Europe look to the example of a strong organization in their region. Effective associational organizations that are active in librarianship provide broader benefit to the profession than just what is received by local members.

Cultural influences on associations

Library structures are organized many ways. IFLA is a global network with hierarchic and geographic subgroups. ALA is a divisional form of hierarchy that tends toward inclusion as best seen by its more than 60,000 members. CILIP has a responsibility to the crown and the government of the UK. This responsibility extends to the accreditation and certification of academic programs, and to the monitoring of professional standards. CILIP also has a strong focus on student development and career advancement. There is a wide vertical range of librarians and non-librarians who are involved with this organization and who are affected by its activities. In South Africa a traditional hierarchy is apparent, but flexibility is gained through geographic branches and conference locations. In the Philippines there are many decentralized small independent organizations that are very tightly focused and that represent specific aspects of the profession, much as their nation is composed of many small discrete islands.

When a student or new librarian is considering affiliation with a professional association there are important subtle factors that may influence decision-making. In North America it is not uncommon for new librarians to feel discouraged with ALA because they would like to take a leadership role immediately. Many of these people would rather have their voice heard in smaller specialized organizations such as NASIG or SLA.

Many potential new members of IFLA are detoured by the need to travel widely for meetings and conferences. Also the voting structure in IFLA requires selection by a local or regional organization. The time involved and the challenge of climbing the ranks in local associational committees to reach appointment as a voting member to IFLA is an unwelcome expectation for many geographically and professionally mobile newcomers to the profession.

The former planned economy of Eastern bloc nations created a rigidity that is still apparent in Eastern European nations and very contrary to the professional outlook and expectations of newly emerging free-market citizens and librarians. While democratization, economic change, and the decentralized structure of a civil society are developing it is very difficult to change past professional mechanisms quickly enough to capture the realization of change that young professionals are currently experiencing in daily life. The new YLIB section that ULISO created is a significant step in the right direction (Table II).

As new librarians select organizations for their professional futures, it is important they recognize the influence of geographic place and cultural history. The many small focused organizations in the Philippines may reflect a geographic island culture that has small separate governing bodies dealing with issues and solving problems.

The history of South African library organizations parallels that of the nation itself (Lor, 1998). The strong white hand overwhelmingly influenced the profession until the post-apartheid era (Kalley, 2000). Racial lines were drawn as distinct librarian's

	IFLA	ALA	CILIP	ULISO	LIASA
Student level membership?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Students vote in organizational ballots?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, as full members	Yes, with full membership
Reduced conference rates for students?	Yes	Yes	Reduced for all members	No	Yes
New member or student recognition group?	Yes, First Timers conference group	New Members Roundtable (NMRT)	Not specifically	YLIB	Not at present but has existed in recent past
Students eligible to serve on committees?	No	Yes, after one year committee service internship	Yes, usually through elections	Yes, when skills or experience fit committee needs	Yes
Listserv or newsletter?	Committee newsletters	Divisional newsletters Listserv	Magazine; Newspaper; E-mail news	Newsletter; Listserv	<i>LIASA-In-Touch; LIASA News</i>
Journal?	<i>IFLA Journal</i>	<i>American Libraries;</i> Divisional journals	Free access to several online library journals	No	<i>South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science</i>

Table II.
Student memberships

organizations met during the Apartheid era. These associations began to come together in the post-apartheid environment. As Kalley relates:

Representatives from the African Library Association of South Africa (ALASA), the Library and Information Workers Organisation (LIWO), the Resource Centre Forums and the South African Institute of Librarianship and Information Science (SILIS), and the READ organization constituted the research group concerned with library and information services (Kalley, 2000, p. 196).

The current role for all librarians in South Africa is to assess the library and information needs of all South Africans, especially the disadvantaged majority. These changes, thanks largely to successful associations like LIASA, are taking place.

Students and new librarians

Most associations provide a vehicle for new members to become involved and gain assistance in mastering the maze of divisions, roundtables, and conference meeting rooms. Prior to the beginning of each IFLA annual conference there is a designated first-timers orientation session. Here IFLA leaders explain what will happen, when, where, and even how to best approach the conference to maximize the experience. This allows new members to feel more comfortable and confident, and to meet other new members in a social setting. Another frequent method of involving new members is with the New Members Round Table (NMRT). This Roundtable group quickly brings new members into a forum for discussion. The NMRT, or similar groups, appear in many organizations such as ALA and IFLA, as well as in many smaller or regional associations.

Many library associations have tiered levels of membership and most – as illustrated in Table II – have a student member category. Student membership usually includes most of the same benefits as full membership, but is offered at a significantly reduced rate. Student memberships give the student opportunities to become involved and learn about the organization before they need to pay the higher membership fee as a librarian. In addition to the social interaction, a student member usually receives online access or print subscriptions to association newsletters and journals. These official publications offer greater depth about the organization and insight into values, goals, and priorities.

A year ago the Bulgarian ULISO, at the urging of a group of library science students, created Y!LIB for young librarians. This new section is designed to encourage collaboration, increase participation in national and international events, and to help young librarians advance their educational opportunities, job possibilities, and publishing efforts. Approximately 60 students are now involved. The hope of Krassimira Angelova, of the library school at the University of Sofia “St Kliment Ohridski”, is that with more promotion of Y!LIB activities more participants will get involved and share their opinions and fresh ideas. Y!LIB, she hopes, will work to enhance the role of young Bulgarian librarians and they will be recognized as the creative and open-minded professionals that they are (Angelova, 2005). This new ULISO section is an encouraging way for a national organization to proactively recognize and promote young library professionals.

Student membership or new member groups are excellent ways to enter an organization, be recognized by existing members as someone new, and begin to make

the professional connections that add value to individual careers and professional associations.

Conclusion

The history and culture of any library association are important factors in their current development and future growth. Students and new librarians should take a moment to discover the traditions and history of an organization. The foundations of an organization effect both current structure and future possibilities. Indicators of opportunity for involvement, such as whether an organization has a vertical or flat structure, a paid or volunteer staff, or whether an organization has centralized leadership versus numerous decentralized leadership roles should all be considered. By evaluating an association, a student can exercise critical thinking to determine if an organization is the best fit for their personal needs and professional goals. Making a preview of possible associations to determine how an individual might contribute is a valuable preliminary tool. The diligence of a search for the best among the plethora of stimulating professional associations will be rewarded.

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