

# **Outline IFLA/Libraries for the Blind Section Presentation with WIPO, November 3rd, Geneva**

## **1. Introduction of IFLA Libraries for the Blind Section (LBS)**

Marijke van Bodengraven is representing the IFLA delegation at WIPO meeting of November 3, 2003. She is Chair of Libraries for the Blind Section (LBS) and a member of the IFLA Governing Board. Marijke van Bodengraven is the director and chairman of the board of FNB Netherlands, the central organisation for the Dutch libraries for the blind.

The IFLA Libraries for the Blind Section is an active organization that includes eighty-five libraries from 39 different countries all around the world. (Australia, Belgium, Botswana, Canada, Switzerland, China, Germany, Denmark, Egypt, Spain, Finland, France, United Kingdom, Croatia, Haiti, Ireland, Israel, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iceland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Korea (Republic of), Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Turkey, United States, South Africa, Zambia). The IFLA Libraries for the Blind Section meets twice annually and prepares a pre-conference expert meeting for its members every two years. The LBS section is also responsible for sessions at the main IFLA conference.

The three groups represented at the November 3, 2003, WIPO meeting have long-standing relationships among themselves. Representatives of LBS regularly attend World Blind Union (WBU) meetings. Many LBS libraries are funders and supporters of the DAISY Consortium. Memberships overlap among the three organizations. Although different organizations, common concerns unite the voices to speak as one.

## **2. The Work of Libraries for the Blind**

- Libraries for the Blind serve blind and visually impaired readers as well as people with a print handicap. Various national definitions of print handicap or perceptual disability exist and are found in national copyright legislation.
- Libraries for the Blind build collections by transforming print into accessible alternative formats including Braille and audio. Hardcopy alternative formats include Braille paper, audiocassette, digital audio on CD (Daisy format). Electronic formats include digital text that can be read on a computer with synthetic speech software, text enlargement software, or using adaptive technology such as a refreshable Braille display.
- Collection content includes material for lifelong learning, leisure reading, newspapers and periodicals, study materials, brochures, reference works, etc. Collection policies are modelled on those of public libraries.

## **3. Information in alternative format, production and delivery**

- To produce alternative formats, Libraries for the Blind transform content from print to alternative format. Facilities in member libraries span from simple production techniques to more advanced production systems, from a manual input using a Perkins Braille to automated file conversion software of publishers' files, from volunteer narration to automatic text to speech production.
- Libraries for the Blind are, for the most part, national libraries and publicly funded, however, there are significant exceptions to both categories. The member

libraries provide a collection of books, newspapers, magazines and other information to blind, visually impaired and print disabled readers. As with all other people, exposure to books and reading is the most important determinant of success both in school and the workplace. It follows that the provision of books and information to this clientele is equally important as public library service to the general public. The real crisis in serving this client group is the dearth of material that is available in alternative format. Research shows that between 3 and 5% of print information is available in a format that is accessible to people who do not read print. This situation must be redressed.

- Through international cooperation, Libraries for the Blind can avoid duplication of production, and achieve a higher level of availability of content than the 3-5% of publications now available in accessible formats.
- Libraries for the Blind have limited resources that are divided between production facilities and library service. Given the cost of alternative format production, most financial resources go to production as compared to service and distribution. This contrasts sharply with the public and academic library models.
- In rightsizing library collections in through comparison with public libraries in similar sized communities, collections for Libraries for the Blind must at least double.
- Books and information are distributed to clients through an agreement of Universal Postal Union which allows for the transportation of 'free matter for the blind', including Braille and audio materials, described films, etc. to circulate around the globe. Internet delivery is another distribution channel that is growing in importance and use.

#### **4. Who do Libraries for the Blind serve?**

- Libraries for the Blind serve people of all ages, newborns, working age adults, and seniors. The largest service group by far is the seniors. Most elderly people lose all or part of their vision through age related illness or disability. Most cannot read Braille and depend on audio materials for daily living, radio, television, talking newspapers, etc. Blind and visually impaired people continue to have the same information needs as others of their cohort. Young people need exposure to books, songs and rhymes to become literate, working age adults require job support information, and access to local, national and international news in the same details as their sighted peers. Elderly people want to maintain the connections to their communities, by reading the local papers, books and periodicals.
- People with print impairment may have a physical handicap, have experienced a trauma or disease (multiple sclerosis, aphasia) or have a learning disability such as dyslexia.
- As an example, clients of FNB Netherlands are statistically represented as: 90% visually impaired, 10% physical handicap, 10% learning disabilities.

#### **5. Co-operation with publishers and property protection**

- LBS will work with its constituent members and with WIPO, IPA, the library community and other relevant organisations to create a trusted environment to provide IPA and WIPO the assurance that LBS members will adhere strictly to all copyright requirements.

- Together with other relevant organisations, a mechanism will be developed to share files and books among member libraries, ensuring adherence to copyright requirements.
- LBS would prefer to acquire electronic content directly from publishers (preferably in standard XML format) and transform it into alternate format.
- Examples of Library/Publisher relationships: Cleveland Public Library and Audible.com (US), CNIB Library and Random House (Canada) and other publishers, PCM in Netherlands for all newspaper and periodical holdings.
- Control cost of acquiring electronic materials from sources (book and newspaper publishers). Prices should be within the range for print materials, in order not to hamper the overall availability. Libraries for the Blind are prepared to pay file handling costs incurred by publishers in preparation to send to member libraries.
- FNB, Royal National Institute of the Blind (UK) and other producers have submitted a joint project proposal to create an European network of publishers, libraries for the blind and others, to establish co-operation in the fields of accessibility, document delivery, copyright and protection.

The current procedures in preparing copyright material for alternate format production are labour intensive:

Request copyright permission for each transcription

Some countries are constrained to production in exclusive or closed formats (4 track, Braille, DAISY).

International exchange of digital material is often prohibited, yet is the answer to the lack of availability of content. As a result enormous duplication of effort is expended in each jurisdiction to make publications accessible.

## **6. What does the Libraries for the Blind Section expect from WIPO and IPA?**

- Promote the exception for materials for the blind and visually impaired in national copyright legislation where it is lacking, to enable Libraries for the Blind to share access to books and information globally.
- Ensure TPM does not prevent the exercise of exception. TPM must not require a further application to access material covered by the copyright exemption
- Harmonize international copyright to eliminate content sharing barriers. Global interlibrary lending has been curtailed by zealous restrictions on lending of digital content among member libraries. Given that only 3 to 5% of printed material is available in alternative format, this new restriction adds greater limits to access.

## **7. What can Libraries for the Blind Section offer to WIPO and IP owners?**

- Create a trusted environment in which circulation among print impaired can/will be controlled, fair use is guaranteed, and the protection of IP is guaranteed.
- Co-operate in the field of developing IP protection mechanisms of the documents in alternative formats (for example: Daisy IPP)
- Co-operate in the field of developing platform level protection mechanisms on electronic publications which will not limit accessibility.
- Consult and co-operate in 'publishing for all'. WIPO and IPA may want to articulate and promote the benefit to Intellectual Property owners to make their publications accessible for all.