

I confess. Up to now I had always believed that attending the annual IFLA conference was a junket for directors of well-funded libraries. After attending this year's IFLA in Amsterdam in August I changed my mind. The sessions were as varied as at any ARLIS/NA conference and just as informative. The setting was ideal with the wealth of library resources that our Dutch colleagues were eager to show us. Perhaps determined would be a better word than eager, since even I found that a schedule of four library tours in one day more was than I could handle, especially with the temptation of so many wonderful museums to visit. The twenty art librarians that stayed in the Museum Hotel could not have had a better location, around the corner from the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh Museum, and the Stedelijk Museum. But most of all, what changed my mind was that I realized that this was the one opportunity we have to meet librarians from around the world and to share our experience. From them I learned about new library and museum buildings, new technology, the importance of exchange programs, the common frustration with museum administrators, and the ingeniousness of all librarians, who must deal with inadequate funding everywhere.

It's difficult to avoid comparisons to ARLIS/NA, especially since the Art Section of IFLA is so self-contained. Sometimes it seemed like I could have been at our annual conference, only with more and varied accents. Other times it seemed like ARLIS/NA must have been like twenty five years ago, exhibiting the idealism and excitement of a new mission. This was most apparent during the business meeting when the benefits and dangers of affiliation with a larger organization were debated.

I left Amsterdam feeling proud of many things we do at home, eager to do what I could to solve problems that I had not been aware of before, and invigorated by my first steps towards understanding of the world wide bonds we share.

Daniel Starr