

Preface

IFLA/FAIFE places great importance on its biennial World Report. This carefully researched survey provides the information professions with a regular insight into the state of intellectual freedom worldwide as it relates to libraries. It seems to be the nature of the sector that few out-and-out *causes celebres* emerge (although a few could be named). The world of journalism is a constant ferment of dangerous and threatening activity, and book publishing produces difficult cases all the time. Internet problems feature prominently in the press and on the Internet itself. Yet it might be possible to assume that libraries exist in an intellectual freedom safe haven. Unfortunately this is not the case. Libraries also share in the threats to privacy and the restrictions on access that trouble the world of knowledge and communication generally. Possibly because the threats creep up on libraries and are often experienced at second hand (for instance, through the suppression of a book or the blocking of a website), they are easier to ignore. The World Report is intended to open our eyes, alert us to dangers and enable us to fight emerging threats or support colleagues in other parts of the world.

The earlier editions of the World Report were produced by the FAIFE Office in Copenhagen (now sadly no more). However, with generous funding from Swedish Sida and the research and editorial efforts of a team at the University of Pretoria, the 2007 World Report emerges through a different route. It follows essentially the same plan as its predecessors, but we are proud to say that more countries than ever before have reported on their own national situation. The World Report will never appear without some controversy. Arguably it would be less of a contribution if it did. Not all of it is cheerful reading, but there are tales of success for national communities of librarians, as well as indications of current and expected problems. FAIFE organises and contributes to professional events all over the world. The good effects of these spread out globally, but the World Report gives everything FAIFE does a solid backing of information content. Please read it, learn and continue to refer to it hereafter.

Paul Sturges

*Chair of the IFLA/FAIFE Committee
March 2008*