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# Cuba and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

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## ABSTRACT

This article focuses on Cuba's international library work by examining the activity of Marta Terry González, a library leader in several top Cuban institutions. As an Afro-Cuban woman, she embodied the rise of the Global South, entering the international arena in 1968 and continuing to be active for forty years. By considering the events she participated in through the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) from start to conclusion, this article explains how Cuban library work democratized the field and expanded and improved library services for more people.

This article looks at how Cuba influenced the world's libraries, and vice versa, using a biographical method and thus tracing the activity of one pivotal individual.<sup>1</sup> The Afro-Cuban librarian Marta Terry González (1931–2018) was born in Havana, raised in a multigenerational household, and educated in philosophy, literature, and librarianship before the Cuban Revolution came to power in 1959. She found her mission and her vocation in building and defending her country's libraries. She served JUCEPLAN, the central planning board run by Che Guevara. She managed the library at Casa de las Américas, the renowned hemispheric cultural organization led by Haydée Santamaria, and she led the José Martí National Library of Cuba through the crisis of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the Cuban economy for several years thereafter.

While keeping these libraries open and serving ever-broader constituencies, she also served as Cuba's library point person internationally. She brought Cuban ideas into the world's library discourse and international library practices and library people to Cuba. She did this through an orga-

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nization founded in Europe, led primarily by librarians from Europe and North America. The setting, her approach, and the outcomes are together a particularity of the struggles that all libraries go through to serve others and to transform themselves. This aspect of Cuba's library work is also a particularity that helps us understand the Cuban approach to libraries, technology, and community.

The Cuban library experience is part of the global library experience. Its emergence in this global context is part of the history of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). Marta Terry González played a key role for Cuba in first learning from IFLA and later in representing the Cuban library experience and defending the national integrity of Cuba against attacks. This is a story—spanning more than four decades—of international and diplomatic significance in the library world and beyond.

IFLA was founded in 1927 as a primarily European/American professional network. After World War II, the organization opened its membership to the countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. While it grew at a faster pace in the 1960s and 1970s, it was still an international organization of Europe, the old colonial and imperialist bloc now joined by the socialist bloc. But IFLA continued to struggle over opening up to the poor countries as they built libraries. The influential Indian librarian and scholar S. R. Ranganathan commented on this:

What the West achieved in library matters in a century, the newly awakened people are bound to achieve within one generation. The present occupants of the IFLA do not all realise this. Since 1948, I have attended several meetings of the IFLA. They have been all courtesy. But in their proposals and action, the old view that "international" in IFLA is exhausted by Western Europe and Northern America persists. It may be unconscious and even unmeant on their part. But to us outsiders, it is as clear as daylight in the tropics. (Ranganathan 1954, 183)

By the 1970s, IFLA had resolved to reach out to the developing world. More countries were forming national library associations that could join IFLA. Air travel and communications had become more affordable. As a result, in the 1980s, participation grew at a quicker pace, with meetings as large as three thousand people. Several of these meetings took place in entirely new regions, in cities such as Manila, Nairobi, Tokyo, and Sydney. Almost ninety years after its founding, IFLA has grown from a small club to a multifaceted international nongovernmental organization. But IFLA resources are tight, and poor-country resources even tighter. In the 1980s, UNESCO funding to IFLA for outreach and support, notably for the library associations in the Global South, ended. Scandinavian librarians managed to find new support for the Advancement of Librarianship Program, but the general picture was less help for developing countries. So, most countries continue to find it tough to organize their own library

associations (required for IFLA membership), travel to meetings, and thus to assume leadership roles.

As it became more inclusive, IFLA faced the problems of the new global information crisis that focused on the production and distribution of artifacts of knowledge such as books and journals. The polarity of wealth and the destructive character of development under colonization meant that libraries outside the rich countries—particularly public libraries—were not stable and well-funded institutions, if they existed. In its earliest days, Cuba's national library was being parceled out for shipment to Spain, packed away repeatedly until it was partly lost to fire, and without government funding until the 1950s. Furthermore, as library systems were built, they faced the application of inadequate Eurocentric frameworks and standards to each of their national contexts. There was also the issue of professional training and the needed translation of global resources into local languages. The global organization of libraries is not a simple task, but the main context for this process has been IFLA because this is where the world's librarians, and most importantly those with the most power, gather.

The importance of IFLA was brought to the attention of Cuban librarians by many sources. In 1968, when Marta was at Casa and Haydée sent her to an IFLA training event in Copenhagen, she passed through Paris. There she met her former professor Carlos Victor Penna, who was still active in international librarianship. He advised her that Cuba should begin planning to join IFLA. Shortly after this, Ekaterina Furtseva, the Soviet Minister of Culture, visited Cuba and Casa de las Américas. She met with staff, and one of the points she made to Marta and others was that IFLA would be an important organization for Cuba to join, both as a resource and a space for learning and sharing.

Cuban participation in IFLA began in 1980 when librarian Olinta Arisa attended IFLA in Manila as a representative of the Ministry of Culture. Marta was also asked to go but could not. Olinta came back a strong advocate for Cuba to pursue membership. But there was one major hurdle to overcome: Cuba could only join IFLA through a national professional librarians' organization. Already librarians were active in five mass organizations. They functioned by neighborhoods and workplaces: the Public Administration Workers Union, which was the labor union for the employees of the libraries; the Cuban Communist Party, which provided political guidance; the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), for addressing the role of the library in the local community; the Federation of Cuban Women, since the librarian profession was dominated by women; and the National Revolutionary Militia, which was concerned with the security of the country. But a national movement was also underway to form professional associations for highly skilled occupations like doctors, engineers, and now librarians.

There had been two different organizations of librarians before 1959: *Asociación de Bibliotecarios Cubanos* and *Collegio de Bibliotecarios*. Both disbanded by 1959, one because of its ties to the Batista regime and the other because its members rejected the coming revolutionary transformation and departed for the capitalist world, mainly the United States. By 1980 it was time to start over. Within a year's time, Olinta and Marta had established the *Asociación Cubana de Bibliotecarios*.

They organized the required documents to apply for legal status from the government, finding ways to set up a bank account and have formal legal and postal representation. They had to have branches in every province. In this process, Blanca Mercedes Mesa provided strong support, including devising a modern post-Batista name for the association: the acronym ASCUBI. The organizing committee was able to hold a founding congress attended by about fifty librarians, many of them former students of either Olinta, Marta, or both. By the 1981 IFLA meeting in Leipzig, the two were prepared to participate as members representing ASCUBI.

For her second IFLA annual meeting in 1982, Marta had a paper accepted, which she presented along with others from Latin America and the Global South. And thirty-two years later, Patte herself sought Marta out to participate in the Havana meeting of the International Board on Books for Young People, a Swiss NGO. The two world library leaders met and remembered that early moment and the unforgettable marvel of IFLA Havana in 1994, and laughed. This pattern became the rhythm of Marta's IFLA work: being welcomed in, meeting with resistance to her perspective, but finally earning acknowledgement, respect, and allies. As third-world librarians in particular found each other, respect came more quickly, then admiration, exchanges, and cooperation. The way to librarianship and professional exchange was actually through the political thicket.

So, from the start, Marta the librarian had to push back. Her very first IFLA workshop in 1968 was not an annual meeting but a training to which Cuba had specifically been invited. But once seated in the meeting in Denmark, she had to recover from surprise when some colleagues tried to shut her out. She found her voice, telling them, "I am not a Soviet tank!" Two international events had at least temporarily absconded with their collegiality. On October 9, 1967, Che Guevara had been assassinated by the CIA in Bolivia. He had become a global icon. And on August 20, 1968, the USSR and its Warsaw Pact allies had invaded Czechoslovakia. Marta's comment prompted various reactions: solidified opposition, embarrassment, and a definite measure of admiration for the willowy thirty-seven-year-old who could turn a phrase in several languages. Her grandmother and great-grandmother—Higinia Terry, who swept her family out of the small town of Madruga to escape concubinage, and Marta O'Farrill, who outlived slavery—were both with her that day.

From 1981 on, Marta began to participate in IFLA annual meetings and

more, missing only three for the next thirty years. When she began to serve on IFLA committees, she traveled to headquarters in The Hague, Netherlands. Her travel has always been problematic because of the US blockade, the lack of financial resources, and the demands of her local responsibilities in Cuba. Yet almost every year she managed to pull together the resources and get the official visas necessary for her international travel. For IFLA Nairobi in 1984, Kenyan visas did not arrive, but the trio of Marta, Olinta, and Miriam Martinez—for many years Cuba's IFLA team—traveled on. They were detained and interrogated at the airport until an IFLA representative arrived to reason with the police. For IFLA Sydney in 1988, she spent money to get to Mexico for a visa, but the Australian embassy turned her down. For IFLA Boston in 2001, the United States issued her visa only in time for her to arrive on the last day of the conference—too late to defend Cuba, as we will see below.

Leaders in the Cuban Revolution, whether world-famous or known only to a few, have had to make great sacrifices, often placing their political and social responsibilities above their personal and family lives. This is also true for anyone who works as a professional, adhering to high ethical standards. In 1987, Marta attended IFLA Brighton four months after her husband had passed away, her emotions and life in an uproar. She remembered that meeting only as a very hard one.

There have been three interrelated ways in which Marta has played an important role in IFLA. First, she was the official representative of Cuban librarians. This entailed carrying lessons from Cuba to IFLA and the reverse, and spreading the word beyond the actual meetings. It entailed connecting people to each other and to new ideas and experience. Key here was making Cuba's national leadership outside libraries—the intelligentsia and the political leaders—take notice of libraries and what they were accomplishing for Cuba. Second, from the 1968 moment in Copenhagen, she carried out a global defense of Cuban libraries—and thus Cuba—against US State Department offensives. Third, she was a leader of third-world librarians in international discourse, helping others also transform the theory and practice of librarianship. As part of this she persuaded Latin American and Caribbean colleagues to become more active in IFLA. All three of these aspects of her work made libraries more effective and better supported in Cuba.

By the time of IFLA Paris in 1989, Cuban and other third-world activity had turned the IFLA climate a little warmer. For one thing, that year, Spanish (a native language for 7 percent of humanity, spoken in thirty-one countries) became the fifth official language of IFLA, along with English, German, French, and Russian (10 percent of humanity and, in 1999, eighteen, fifty-one, and sixteen countries, respectively). Only Chinese (19 percent of humanity and in thirty-three countries) would have embraced more of the world's population. This new policy favored the rising Latin

Americans. Today Chinese and Arabic, a native language for 4 percent of humanity and spoken in twenty-six countries, are also IFLA's official languages, in line with the languages of the United Nations (Simons and Fennig 2018).

An experienced and well-known library administrator from the United States had just been elected to the board of IFLA: Robert Wedgeworth. During the week of the IFLA meeting, he arranged a bilateral discussion between ASCUBI and the American Library Association (ALA). The purpose of the meeting was for Marta to present the Cuban library experience and the merits of holding an IFLA annual meeting in Havana. The Paris session, which opened the door toward IFLA Havana in 1994, also launched a long collaboration between Wedgeworth and Marta. Wedgeworth was then dean of the School of Library Service at Columbia University, after serving as Executive Director of the ALA from 1972 to 1985. He was also the first African American in that ALA position. Elected president of IFLA in 1991, Wedgeworth was the first non-European to hold that position and only the second from the United States; he served two terms until 1997. He had come up through the professional ranks in the United States, working at public and academic libraries, and specializing in the application of new information technologies. A news item from Rutgers University, where he earned a PhD, tells a characteristic story about him: "In 1962, while a cataloger at the public library in Kansas City, he was picked to demonstrate the library of the future at the American Library Association's booth at the World's Fair in Seattle. 'We had a Xerox copier there, and copiers were rare then,' he said. 'We had a Univac solid-state computer that would give you a computer printout and lots of lights flashing and disks whirring. Our booth was really popular'" (Branson 2013). Wedgeworth was more than aware of equity issues in US librarianship. He had also been active internationally since the 1960s, and was committed to IFLA becoming more global, working for some years as an IFLA governing board member alongside Marta. The two librarians—Cuban and US—shared common interests in both equity and technology.

IFLA's 1991 annual meeting took place in Moscow. Wedgeworth was elected president and Marta vice president. Marta was the first Latin American IFLA officer, and only the third woman. This was quite a meeting, taking place in an unstable power void. Yeltsin was seizing power, and the streets were full of political protests, not to mention rumor. Marta was determined to witness whatever was afoot—she said it felt like "the sinking of something very big"—that she left the conference building, passing a colleague who declared, "Marta Terry skipping a board session? This is a first!"

She found her way to Red Square and sat there watching people, protestors, and police forces come and go. But how to understand it? Was the government actually imploding? Back in her hotel room, she got an un-

expected call. It was none other than Pancho—Francisco García Valls—from the University of Havana in the Batista days, from JUCEPLAN, and now from the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance. CMEA was meeting that same week in Moscow. “It’s going to end,” he told her. “A lot’s going to change.”

But Marta, newly elected IFLA vice president, saw something different in IFLA Moscow. Whatever was happening outside, the world’s librarians—especially from the Global South—had spent hard money to get there to meet and share. The hosting librarians were in attendance despite their personal and family anxieties. Members from the West were slipping away with their luggage, able to negotiate new air tickets and depart hastily. A murmur began about closing the meeting early.

But dozens of participants had not yet made their presentations. This might be their first IFLA, or their last. Marta raised her voice to carry on with the meeting. “Whatever happens, we are the world’s librarians and we cannot be afraid,” she argued. Wedgeworth agreed, and their unique partnership was further solidified: a unity of opposites in the highest offices, an African American from the United States as president and an Afro-Cuban woman as vice president. This strong collaboration was a counterweight to the crisis that began to engulf Cuban society as its then-largest trading partner collapsed, causing economic activity on the island to drop by one-third within a few weeks. It was the beginning of the Special Period in Time of Peace, in which Cuba had to reinvent itself in order to survive.

Marta experienced IFLA Barcelona in 1993 as the very best on account of the respect and friendship expressed between professionals from many countries, especially the Spanish-speaking diaspora and the developing countries. At the same time, one matter in particular arose for the first time. From the rich countries—some thought it emanated from the American Library Association, which has a similar unit—there came a proposal for an IFLA committee to assess and evaluate the world’s libraries (and countries) on measures, not yet identified, of free access to information and freedom of expression. Marta expressed her concern that this committee would reprimand only the vulnerable or less-developed-library countries and interfere with international library cooperation and trust. It would talk without listening. She and others succeeded in tabling the proposal.

Over the next year, Marta, as head of the hosting committee, and Wedgeworth, as IFLA president, worked closely toward a successful IFLA Havana. The ongoing activity of IFLA and contributions from member countries (and more) had to be encouraged and organized. The hosting committee had to develop and implement a plan, and that was Marta’s expertise. Apart from nailing down every detail, she focused on mobilizing Cuban librarians to attend and speak. She wanted them to learn and mea-

sure themselves by global standards. They would advance where needed as they listened to librarians from elsewhere. They would draw strength from their own achievements as they explained them to the visitors. And all this would further awaken the international community to the strength of libraries in the contexts of the Cuban Revolution and of Latin America and the entire Global South, and the Cuban government to the importance of libraries for national development—including in the Special Period. For Cuba was just three years into the economic crisis kicked off by the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union—a crisis that shrunk the island's economy by one-third (measured as GDP per person) from 1990 to 1993 (Morris 2014). (It is interesting to note that the Russians attending IFLA Havana, led by Ekaterina Genieva, constituted their first big delegation to an IFLA annual meeting.)

A particular aspect of the organizing work was technology—where Marta and Wedgeworth found common cause. His vision was IFLANET—a “virtual IFLA” that would involve individuals and groups who could not attend annual meetings (Wedgeworth 1994). It was clear that some colleagues saw that as another barrier for poorer countries with less computer infrastructure. Marta's vision was putting Cuba's own strengths in a global context for all to see—with regard to its technological resourcefulness as well as its libraries. The first step was to connect IFLA leadership on several continents, in and out of Cuba. Canadians were the early hosts of this service. Marta persuaded key Cuban agencies to provide more computers and phone lines to Cuban libraries so that they could help organize the meeting. She mobilized Cuban libraries to use the fledgling IFLANET.

As the date for the meeting approached, librarians from more and more countries connected. They got onto email, many for the first time, to make inquiries and register. When they arrived at the conference, each one received the IFLA conference papers on a CD, itself shareable through each nation's more- or less-developed computer infrastructure. By the following year, ninety countries were represented on IFLANET, many of them following Marta's example to make the case to their own governments for the practical necessity of expanded technological resources for librarians. As email continued to be adopted, delegates from Eastern Europe and the Global South who had never attended began to participate in IFLA, reading conference papers and attending meetings. And all this was launched by a partnership between Cuba, the United States, and IFLA headquarters in Western Europe—in spite of the US blockade. What had appeared to many as an exclusionary move was in fact including more librarians from the Global South.

There were several highlights of IFLA Havana. Cuban librarians demonstrated their high standards for service to the blind, with a seminar organized that brought together the IFLA Libraries for the Blind Section

and Cuba's national organization of blind and visually impaired people, ANCI; this work is still bearing fruit in Cuba today. There was also the networking at all levels with librarians from Africa and Latin America. Finally, the meeting succeeded through a very short and sudden crisis of emigration to the United States. In early August, just days before IFLA was to convene, the US government's Radio Martí broadcast that friendly boats would be coming to illegally ferry Cubans to a new life in Florida. In the austere economy, plenty of people were lured. They climbed onto boats and rafts, patched together or stolen. But the promised boats did not come until the US Coast Guard activated its fleet and moved more than 32,000 Cubans to US detention camps in Guantanamo. After one week, trapped in brinkmanship by the US radio message, Cuba set a new policy: sail to the United States or anywhere if you choose, it's now legal to leave. The tables were turned, and Miami's Cuban community began to reverse course, warning, "Don't risk it!" The next week the United States proposed making legal a limited flow of immigration. The agreement was signed by both governments in September. The murderous drama—for people totally unprepared for the open sea were drowning—played out during IFLA Havana, and yet the session was a success. At a professional level, Havana marked a high point as well: Marta and her hosting committee had mobilized Cuban librarians to participate in every session. This broad contact between Cuban professionals and their global counterparts was a tremendous blockade breaker and stimulus to the professionals on the island.

Included in this was the involvement of librarians from the United States. Before the meeting, the American Library Association was caught up in discussions: Could US librarians legally go? Debate was high over interpreting the US Treasury Department's travel limitations. Should US librarians go? And as the meeting got underway, the plane carrying ALA president Betty Turock received a bomb threat and was turned back. The top US library representative did not get to IFLA Havana.

Even with those disruptions, the US delegation was seventy-five strong, including public librarians, school librarians, academic librarians, LIS faculty, and others. And all seventy-five of them were moved by what they called their "productive participation" in the meeting to sign a "Statement of Librarians from the United States and Puerto Rico on US-Cuba Relations." This statement called on the United States to normalize relations with Cuba and end the blockade. It noted that trade in food and medicine would stem the current exodus from Cuba. It noted that US travel restrictions were contrary to library principles of intellectual freedom and the right to know. And it acknowledged the hosting activities of "hundreds of dedicated Cuban librarians from all types of libraries throughout the island."<sup>2</sup> After the success of Havana, IFLA asked Marta to advise other host countries to help make meetings in new locales a success. Again using

email before any other tool, she took the responsibility to advise Turkish librarians and then Chinese librarians as they prepared to host their first IFLA annual meetings, in 1995 and 1996, respectively. And she helped them in person. Her advice was always to mobilize your own librarians to participate and show off your country's culture as best you can. She and ASCUBI had indeed galvanized librarians and impressed others. IFLA Havana was for many Cubans a high point, a crest of a wave of innovation that libraries rode for many years. Even today, an IFLA-ASCUBI discussion continues—via (of course) an island-wide LISTSERV, that is, an electronic discussion list operated by the foreign-relations department of the national library. Marta's comment regarding any IFLA annual meeting that did not recruit local librarians to attend in force was, "Boring!"

By IFLA Copenhagen in 1997, Marta was chairing a preseminar for developing country librarians as part of IFLA's Advancement of Librarianship program, later the Action for Development through Libraries program, funded primarily by public and private funds from Scandinavia. She had been serving as a regular advisor and trainer for this program to advance librarianship in the Global South.

When Robert Wedgeworth became president of IFLA (1991-1997), he felt that IFLA needed to engage in work on two issues: copyright and intellectual freedom. These became a focus for his last two years. In 1995 at IFLA Istanbul's council meeting, eight library associations from Finland, Norway, and Sweden proposed a motion, which passed, in general support of Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration was a cold-war-era statement of principles adopted by the United Nations.<sup>3</sup>

The IFLA Executive Board then established an ad hoc Committee on Access to Information and Free Expression (CAIFE) and arranged for the American librarian Marianna Tax Choldin to address the IFLA annual meeting in 1995 in Beijing. In her talk (later published by IFLA) she lays out three assumptions: First, that librarians as a profession are committed to the fundamental principle of access to information and freedom of expression. Second, that "every country—no exceptions whatever—has problems with access to information and freedom of expression." Finally, she stated that

people within a country know their own situation better than anyone outside possibly can, and are therefore in the best position to suggest strategies and solutions for improving access and achieving freedom of expression in their own country. This assumption has a very important corollary, of which I remind myself frequently, and I will take the liberty now of reminding you: outsiders cannot solve this kind of problem; only people who live inside a country can do it. There are certainly useful things outsiders can do, but preaching, pointing fingers, and inciting to action while safely on the other side of the fence are rarely, in my view, among them. (Choldin 1996)

CAIFE was led by British library professor A. J. Evans, who relied on a de facto executive group of Marianna; another American, Robert Doyle; and an Australian member of the IFLA executive board and treasurer, Warren Horton; as well as a committee of thirty-some librarians from around the world. In discussions during 1996 and 1997, different viewpoints surfaced: a German librarian called for forceful action, and a British member argued that impatience should trump diplomacy. A member from the United States commented, "IFLA needs a platform to 'bark' from" (Byrne 2007, 60–61). On the other hand, a Chinese librarian asserted that cultural differences must be respected. Marta urged courage, patience, and diplomacy. She was supportive of the initiative but was determined that it avoid becoming a way for the rich and powerful nations to beat on the poor and less powerful. One can sum this up as the search for universal standards that can only be applied in a very polarized and stratified world. As a result, controversy is inevitable. By 1997, CAIFE had become a permanent IFLA initiative called the Committee on Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE). A process of information gathering from the countries of IFLA was underway.

While this was unfolding, the United States was taking further steps against Cuba as it experienced the extreme austerity of the Special Period. The United States hardened its embargo with the 1992 Torricelli Act and the 1996 Helms–Burton Act. These turned the blockade from a US policy into a US law. Helms–Burton aimed explicitly at "international sanctions against the Castro government in Cuba [and] to plan for support of a transition government leading to a democratically elected government in Cuba."<sup>4</sup> Among other measures, it authorized funds to support democracy and human rights groups in Cuba. This act made official and public what had been decades of secret US subversion in Cuba.

Cuba's response was to pass a law making it illegal to distribute or accept Helms–Burton funds. In 1998, two dissidents in Cuba announced that their home book collection was an "independent library," and a handful of other dissidents followed suit. A US librarian, Robert Kent, and a Cuban emigré hired by organizations funded by the US government formed the Friends of Cuban Libraries and began advocating for these so-called libraries on US library listservs, at American Library Association meetings, and to the US media. Making several trips to Cuba and giving out money, medical supplies, and books to US AID-funded groups and others, Kent was deported from Cuba in February 1999 (Sparanese 2001).

Kent was also communicating with the FAIFE Committee itself. In September 1999, based primarily on Kent's information as well as phone contact with some of the "independent librarians" in Cuba, the chair of FAIFE (the Australian librarian Alex Byrne) and IFLA staff in The Hague decided to issue a report critical of Cuba and send a letter to Fidel Castro. IFLA's August 2000 annual meeting was held in Jerusalem during height-

ened conflict between Israeli forces and Palestinians. This was a polarizing venue: the host committee had excluded Palestinian librarians, and thus the Arab librarians boycotted and held a separate meeting elsewhere. An Israeli official opened the conference by explicitly contradicting IFLA's promises of maintaining an open conference (Kagan 2005, 40). Marta was among a number of librarian delegates from the Global South who were swept into lengthy and frightening interrogations either upon arrival or departure at the airport. She was traveling alone without a hotel reservation or any local friends. But she pursued her objective: to defend and advance what she was starting to call the "dependent libraries" of Cuba and elsewhere, those that rely on a mass base of patrons, stable funding, and their own country's publishing sector as the basis for collections and programs of all kinds. The FAIFE chair remembered well one particular word Marta used for the FAIFE actions of the previous season: "Slander!" (Byrne 2007, 101). As the committee's discussion unfolded, IFLA President Wedgeworth characterized it as the coming of age of FAIFE.

The barrage of commentary in favor of the "independent library" was also meeting resistance outside of FAIFE. North American and other librarians traveled to Cuba and reported back in print. IFLA and the American Library Association each sent an investigative team of librarians to Cuba in 2001. They found book collections, not independent libraries; political activists, not librarians; government action against those activists, but not against libraries or books. And, welcomed by Marta and others, they visited Cuba's extensive library infrastructure and talked with librarians.<sup>5</sup> They found many so-called banned books—in the collections of the national library and various public libraries. Over this same time, Marta and other Cuban librarians came to ALA meetings to describe the reality of libraries in Cuba.

The ALA Council adopted a resolution that called on both the US government and IFLA to improve access to books on all topics. Ultimately, both ALA and IFLA got the facts and understood that they and their profession were being used by the US government in a sustained attack on Cuba, spelled out in the language of Helms–Burton. The international library community had made sense of a trick played on them. Although every US librarian attending IFLA Havana had signed the postconference letter urging an end to the blockade for reasons of intellectual freedom and the right to know, IFLA had taken no action on the matter after 1994 (Kagan 2005, 39). Instead, as Wedgeworth explained, "After the formal adoption of the FAIFE program, Robert Kent and others tried to hijack the program" (R. Wedgeworth, pers. comm.).

But by partnering with librarians inside Cuba, both the ALA and IFLA were able to obtain and disseminate information that unmasked the dishonest "independent libraries" campaign. This was done through people-to-people contact and through official research. The ALA even filed Free-



Figure 1. Marta Terry González (third from left) with three US colleagues (l-r), library educator Betty Turock, librarian Al Kagan, and library educator E. J. Josey, at a Social Responsibilities Round Table reception, part of an American Library Association conference. (Photo courtesy of Al Kagan.)

dom of Information Act requests that went unanswered—but still they pieced together the facts regarding US sponsorship of the “independent libraries.” A summary ALA statement in 2008 explicated how US government funds were channeled through multiple organizations in order to sponsor and promote the “independent libraries” (Dowling 2008). In the end even librarians with no prior knowledge of Cuba could see that they were phony.

Through all this, Marta was the representative of Cuba and its actual libraries. She became a personal target of the attack on Cuba. But her decades of leadership in Cuba and in IFLA; her base among librarians of the Global South; and her continuous diplomacy and nonconfrontational style, honed in the libraries of Revolutionary Cuba, saw Cuba through this attack. As a postscript to this prolonged battle for Cuba’s right to self-determination, she won FAIFE support to organize librarians to tackle access to basic information regarding health and safety. The goal was practical and exemplary projects providing intellectual freedom and access to information. They produced materials for training African librarians, most of whom work without access to library education. In these documents, Marta refers to “international consensus on these matters” and explains:

So what is intellectual freedom? As we see it, it [is] an individual’s capacity for expressing his or her ideas. Those ideas come out of previous



Figure 2. Robert Wedgeworth naming Marta Terry González an Honorary Fellow of IFLA in 2006. (Photo courtesy of Robert Wedgeworth.)

information, previous knowledge that has become his or her interpretation of reality. . . . When a librarian feels free to give any information requested by a user, that librarian is also using that sovereign right. The manifestation of intellectual freedom may be determined by religion, culture, ideology, and national social heritage. (Terry González 2009)

Marta remembers IFLA Seoul in 2006 as the peak of the battle: a whispering campaign against her and against Cuba and even a painful—and dangerous at age seventy-five—tumble over a chair. But she was vindicated that same year: IFLA named her an Honorary Fellow (see fig. 2). This award is only given to those with decades of service and leadership to IFLA. She was then the twenty-first person so recognized over eighty years of IFLA; the third woman; and the first from outside Europe or North America. She had made many varied contributions advancing librarianship worldwide, and now this was being widely acknowledged. After so many campaigns, struggles, and victories, she felt that it was an award both to her and to Cuba.

## NOTES

1. This chapter is a condensed chapter 10 from Alkalimat and Williams (2013). Used with permission.
2. The document has been reproduced numerous times, for example as “Statement” (2000).
3. Article 19 reads as follows: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive

and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." The United Nations voted on and adopted the declaration in 1948; the Soviet bloc and Saudi Arabia abstained.

4. Helms–Burton is formally the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act 22 § 6021–6091 (1996).
5. For a brief and clear history of the recent stages of Cuban library development, see Pateman (2001). The author was also very active at the time in helping dispel confusion and misinformation.

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