

ANNEX 1: Relevant Key Documents

A. Key United Nations Documents

Five articles of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) are relevant to the question of censorship:

- Article 18 - *Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion...*
- Article 19 - *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.*
- Article 27 (1) - *Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.*
- Article 29
 1. *Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.*
 2. *In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.*
 3. *These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.*
- Article 30 – *Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.*

Article 19, especially, speaks quite directly to the “right to freedom of...expression...[which] includes freedom to...seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers,” which clearly excludes the general acceptability of censorship.

The [UNESCO Public Library Manifesto](#) (1949, as updated in 1994) states that:

Freedom, prosperity and the development of society and of individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society. Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information.

B. Key IFLA Documents

In 1997, IFLA itself proposed “[Principles of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression](#)” that stated that:

In order to promote the spread of knowledge, education and culture to all nations throughout the world it is essential that all forms of information should be allowed to flow freely. Not only will such

access to information contribute to international understanding but will also enable diversity of opinions to be recognised and respected and the mutual enrichment of cultures to be enhanced. [...]

- *Librarians have a professional responsibility to present in the libraries under their control all perspectives on both current and historical issues: collections and services should not be subject to any form of ideological, political, racial, linguistic or religious censorship.*
- *Library Associations and Libraries should challenge any form of censorship which inhibits fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment. [...]*

These Principles were followed in 1999 by the [IFLA Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom](#) that states that:

[...] human beings have a fundamental right to access to expressions of knowledge, creative thought and intellectual activity, and to express their views publicly.

IFLA believes that the right to know and freedom of expression are two aspects of the same principle. The right to know is a requirement for freedom of thought and conscience; freedom of thought and freedom of expression are necessary conditions for freedom of access to information. [...]

IFLA therefore calls upon libraries and library staff to adhere to the principles of intellectual freedom, uninhibited access to information and freedom of expression and to recognize the privacy of library users. [...]

- *Libraries have a responsibility both to guarantee and to facilitate access to expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity. To this end, libraries shall acquire, preserve and make available the widest variety of materials, reflecting the plurality and diversity of society.*
- *Libraries shall ensure that the selection and availability of library materials and services is governed by professional considerations and not by political, moral and religious views.*
- *Libraries shall acquire, organize and disseminate information freely and oppose any form of censorship.*
- *Libraries shall make materials, facilities and services equally accessible to all users. There shall be no discrimination due to race, creed, gender, age or for any other reason. [...]*

In 2002, IFLA published the [Internet Manifesto](#), which stated (as updated in 2014) that:

Library and information services have a vital role in ensuring freedom of access to information and freedom of expression, and have a responsibility to: [...] support the right of users to seek and share information [...]

IFLA encourages all governments to support the unhindered flow of Internet accessible information and freedom of expression, to ensure openness and transparency by opposing attempts to censor or inhibit access, and ensure that surveillance and data collection are demonstrably legal, necessary and proportionate. [...]

The [IFLA Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers \(full version\)](#), as last updated in 2016, stresses that:

The core mission of librarians and other information workers is to ensure access to information for all for personal development, education, cultural enrichment, leisure, economic activity and informed participation in and enhancement of democracy [and that] librarians and other information workers reject the denial and restriction of access to information and ideas most particularly through censorship whether by states, governments, or religious or civil society institutions.

Finally, the [Summary of the Report of the IFLA Global Vision](#) underlined that while there was strong support for access to information among the library profession, there was a need to do more to promote free expression.

ANNEX 2: Censorship in Practice

A number of specific acts and ongoing practices, past or present, provide examples of censorship widely held to be problematic:

- The burning of books the placing of their titles on a “forbidden” list, insofar as such practices result in reduced access to such works
- The jailing, killing of otherwise silencing of journalists, inasmuch as journalists are so immediately associated with the facts that they report or comment upon
- The proscribing of “fake news” as a pretence for the suppression of political dissent
- The use of zero-rating or other forms of non-neutrality of the Internet, insofar as this reduces access to non-privileged content
- The forbidding of the performance of certain plays in theatres or films in cinemas, or the broadcasting of certain programs on television for political reasons
- The broad or long-term filtering of Internet search results or the active blocking otherwise of access to Internet content or search tools for political reasons
- The seizing of politically challenging content at a border customs post
- The removal of morally, religiously or politically challenging books from library collections
- The removal of passages or illustrations from published books for political or religious reasons
- The removal of articles from scientific or scholarly journal suites that would be inconvenient to a government in a given market
- The abuse of copyright to prevent negative reviews

Others are more ambiguous, raising questions about how to balance the fight against censorship with other legitimate objectives such as privacy:

- “Right to be forgotten” legislation in various states and regions is an example of Internet filtering on which there is a range of reasonable opinions even within the library profession, reflecting the competing principles of anti-censorship and respect for the privacy of individuals.

There are exceptional situations in which certain restrictions on the free flow of information access might be justified to protect the safety or legal interests of members of a state or of the state itself:

- The access by young children to certain sexually explicit or violent content
- The circulation of child pornography or depictions of cruelty to animals
- The publishing of “hate” speech or writing against vulnerable populations
- The posting of incitements to terrorist activity on social media platforms
- The publishing of content that is libellous or defamatory
- The unauthorized diffusion of the private personal information of others
- The posting of “revenge pornography” on social media Internet platforms
- The advertising of tobacco or alcohol
- The advertising to the general public of medical pharmaceutical products
- The publication in news media of information about a current criminal trial
- The sharing of pirated copyright-protected content
- The divulcation of state secrets or commercially confidential corporate information