



IFLA has been heavily involved in the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society, the first phase of which was held in Geneva, December 2003 and the second phase in Tunis, 16-18 November 2005.

Libraries the Information Society in Action

**Address to Plenary
World Summit on the Information Society**

Alex Byrne, President of IFLA

Tunis, 18 November 2005

President of the World Summit on the Information Society, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. We congratulate those who have been involved in this long WSIS process on what has been achieved to date and encourage full commitment to the implementation of the goals expressed in Geneva and here in Tunis.

I have the honour to speak to you as the President of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions which is the global organisation for libraries and information services and represents more than 500 thousand library service points as well as the 2.5 billion registered library users around the world.

We are concerned with the young child who opens his first book or clicks on her first website, with the student who researches a topic, with the professional building a career, with the farmer trying to be more competitive, with the researcher using e-journals to investigate a new material or prevention of a disease and with all the people whose lives are changed through ready access to relevant and reliable information in any format.

We stand with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and other distinguished speakers in stating without equivocation.

Everyone has the right to freedom of 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 Federation and our member organisations are vitally involved with the creation of the Information Society and its consequences for both economic and social development. To advance that agenda, which is vital for a secure and fair world, last week the Federation held a pre Summit meeting,

Libraries: the Information Society in Action -- <http://www.bibalex.org/wsisalex> -- in conjunction with UNESCO and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. We discussed the key issues of the information society and proclaimed a manifesto, **The Alexandria Manifesto on Libraries, the Information Society in Action** -- <http://www.ifla.org/publications/alexandria-manifesto-on-libraries--the-information-society-in-action>.

The Manifesto recognises that libraries and information services are essential to the roll out of the inclusive Information Society. Their impartial operation helps to safeguard universal civil rights and intellectual freedom. The unique feature of libraries and information services is that they respond to the particular questions and needs of individuals, complementing the general transmission of knowledge by the mass media. They build capacity and provide support and training for effective use of digital and other information resources. Libraries are critical to the development agenda and help to realise the Millennium Development Goals, including reduction of poverty.

To enable access to information by all peoples, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions is committed to the fundamental human rights to know, learn and communicate without restriction. It opposes censorship and supports balance and fairness in intellectual property regulation. IFLA is also vitally concerned to promote multilingual content, cultural diversity and the special needs of Indigenous peoples, minorities and those with disabilities.

IFLA urges national, regional and local governments as well as international organisations to

- **invest in library and information services as vital elements of Information Society strategies, policies and budgets**
- **promote open access to information and recognise the importance of information literacy and vigorously support for strategies to create a literate and skilled populace which can advance and benefit from the global Information Society.**

The version of this paper to be loaded to the website includes the key statements by IFLA, the Information Literacy Experts Meeting and the Conference of Directors of National Libraries.

Your Excellency, delegates and observers, I thank you for your time and encourage you to continue the work to create an information society for all, an information society which guarantees the dual freedoms of access to information and of expression and which will be facilitated by strengthening the global network of libraries.

Associated documents:

- **Alexandria Manifesto on Libraries, the Information Society in Action**
<http://www.ifla.org/publications/alexandria-manifesto-on-libraries--the-information-society-in-action>

- *Manifeste d'Alexandrie sur les bibliothèques, la société de l'information en action*
<http://www.ifla.org/FR/publications/manifeste-d-alexandrie-sur-les-biblioth-ques--la-soci-t--de-l-information-en-action>
- *Manifiesto de Alejandría sobre Bibliotecas: la Sociedad de la Información en Acción*
<http://www.ifla.org/ES/publications/manifiesto-de-alejandr-a-sobre-bibliotecas-la-sociedad-de-la-informaci-n-en-acci-n>
- **Statement: Beacons of the Information Society - The Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning**
<http://www.ifla.org/publications/beacons-of-the-information-society-the-alexandria-proclamation-on-information-literacy>
- *Faros para la Sociedad de la Información - Declaración de Alejandría sobre la alfabetización informacional y el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida*
<http://www.ifla.org/ES/publications/faros-para-la-sociedad-de-la-informaci-n-declaraci-n-de-alejandr-a-sobre-la>
- **Maintaining our digital memory: a declaration of support for the World Summit on the Information Society**
<http://www.ifla.org/publications/maintaining-our-digital-memory-a-declaration-of-support-for-the-world-summit-on-the-inf>
- *Conservation de notre mémoire numérique: une déclaration de soutien au Sommet mondial de la société de l'information*
<http://www.ifla.org/files/assets/wsis/Documents/declaration-cdnl2005-fr.pdf>

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