

"Libraries Help Bridge Digital Divide"

Top Librarian

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Christine Deschamps, President of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) called for the forthcoming UN World Summit on the Information Society to recognise that libraries had a key role in tackling the growing "digital divide".

She pleaded that world leaders should avoid 're-inventing the wheel'. Instead they should concentrate investment in the existing library network. "*A relatively modest investment in technology, training and content would work wonders in making information and knowledge available to the information poor*", she said.

Deschamps was launching IFLA's response to the Draft Declaration of Principles and Draft Action Plan, issued for consultation by the organisers of the UN World Summit.

IFLA is calling for the Summit to

- commit member States to connect all their public libraries to the Internet by 2006
- support the skills development of librarians
- ensure that intellectual property laws for electronic publications do not prevent public access
- recommend public investment in information and telecommunication technologies
- ensure that libraries providing public access are eligible for affordable connection charges.

"The skill, energy and commitment of the world's librarians will not fail you in the struggle to bridge the digital divide – provide you give them the resources required", was the challenge made by the IFLA President to the World Summit.

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