



## ***Promoting the global information commons: IFLA response to the WSIS Declaration of Principles from the library and information sector***

### ***A. Our Common Vision of the Information Society***

IFLA and its members share a common vision of an inclusive Information Society in which everyone can create, access, use and share information and knowledge and which is based on the fundamental right of human beings to both access and express information without restriction.

Libraries and information services provide access to information, ideas and works of imagination in any medium and regardless of frontiers. They serve as gateways to knowledge, thought and culture, offering essential support for independent decision-making, cultural development, research and lifelong learning by both individuals and groups. They contribute to the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom and help to safeguard democratic values and universal civil rights. Consequently, they are committed to offering their clients access to relevant resources and services without restriction. They assist people to develop lifelong literacy -the range of competencies necessary to engage fully with the Information Society.

International understanding and dialogue is supported through access to information and knowledge from other nations and cultures. IFLA and its members are committed to addressing the digital divide and the information inequality that results from it.

### ***B. An information Society for all: key principles***

#### **1) The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development**

Libraries – and especially national, public, school and university libraries – express the aspirations of civil society, reflecting and responding to the interests and hopes of their communities.

#### **2) Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for an inclusive information society**

Throughout the world, libraries and information services provide access points to the Internet for members of communities and also the support and skills development which are essential to effective use of the infrastructure and achievement of empowerment.

#### **3) Access to information and knowledge**

By enabling access to information in all formats across frontiers and through time libraries and information services create a global information commons which fosters understanding and communication, creating a globally inclusive information society in which all can express their dreams, ideas and opinions and take in those of others.

#### **4) Capacity building**

Libraries and information services provide secure, professionally supported, environments in which individuals' literacies and community capacities can be developed. IFLA, its member associations, libraries and individual information professionals have long promoted the Information Society and worked for its realisation with a special concern for the disadvantaged both across and within nations.

### **5) Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs**

Trust and confidence between peoples and nations are maintained only in climate of understanding which is established through knowledge about others. The 'trust framework' and 'cyber-security' must therefore be firmly based on the principle of ensuring freedom of access to information and freedom of expression.

### **6) Enabling environment**

IFLA advocates a global information commons through which all people will be enabled to seek and impart information. Its realisation requires, at a minimum, ubiquitous access to sufficient affordable bandwidth, up to date and affordable ICTs, unrestricted multilingual access to information and skills development programs to enable all to both access information and disseminate their own.

### **7) ICT applications: benefits in all aspects of life**

Through their accessibility within communities, libraries and information services provide ideal arenas in which ICTs can be deployed and employed to benefit their communities.

### **8) Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content**

Libraries and information services work in many ways and at many levels to exhibit and support cultural and linguistic identity and diversity. Demonstration of cultural diversity through library holdings and programs is particularly important to indigenous communities and in societies and nations with rich migrant traditions.

Preservation of cultural heritage is core business for societies' memory institutions: libraries, archives and museums, carrying knowledge and traditions across time and space. IFLA promotes high standards in preservation practice and engages with contemporary issues including the challenges posed by both preservation through digitisation and the preservation of digital objects.

### **9) Media**

The presentation of a plurality of news, entertainment, scholarly and other media via libraries and information services supports the diversity of media and helps sustain an informed and engaged audience.

### **10) Ethical dimensions of the Information Society**

The fundamental principle of the public library, that it should be open to all, underpins the strong ethical stance of library and information professionals who embrace the fundamental values of the Information Society. As agents of tolerant and inclusive civil societies, libraries and information services, and their global representative IFLA, oppose exploitative, abusive and illegal use of ICTs but are concerned that any regulatory measures should not compromise the precious rights of freedom of information and freedom of expression.

### **11) International and regional cooperation**

IFLA is the global voice of the library and information profession which promotes collaboration in the

provision of library and information services worldwide. While not taking a position on specific funding mechanisms, IFLA is very conscious of the need to take urgent and decisive action to bridge the digital divide.

### ***C. Towards an Information Society for all based on shared knowledge***

IFLA and its members are focussed on developing an equitable and inclusive Information Society which will provide opportunities for all and will be firmly based on human rights and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity. A modest investment in the worldwide network of libraries and information services would build on the existing foundation to

- provide an extensive web of internet access points, each supported with advice and training
- offer relevant information in appropriate formats, languages and
- develop literacies and capacity
- support health and education
- promote economic development
- ensure the preservation and promotion of culture
- foster respect and understanding between peoples.

**Alex Byrne**

President-elect, IFLA

**Latest Revision:** *June 06, 2004* Copyright © International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions [www.ifla.org](http://www.ifla.org)