



## Address by the President, Donna Scheeder

---

Greetings IFLA

It has been a year since I stood before you at the end of the closing session and delivered a call to action. The call to action has four aspects and is rooted in the challenges presented by the IFLA Trend Report. I asked you to join me on a journey to build a change agenda Based on those four aspects of change and based on what I have seen during your library association and other professional meetings, my own President's meeting, and the conference program this week it is clear to me that you are answering the call with actions of your own.

This past year I had the good fortune to deliver the call to action to librarians in Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America and North America. I saw with my own eyes and listened to presentations on how many of you from all types of libraries are collaborating with your community to transform your libraries into a key community assets dedicated to meeting community needs and as I stated last year and in all my speeches since, I mean community in the broadest sense of the word.

Last April, the President's meeting, *Call to Action: Building the Change Agenda* was held on April 6 and 7 in Toronto, Canada. Over 80 experts from around the world gathered together to listen to panel presentations which dealt with aspects of the 4 levels of change, individual, institutional, national policy and global policy. Each panel was followed by table discussion and report outs that looked at the challenges and the responses detailed by the panellists. At the end of the two days of sessions we discovered that we had learned many things and gained many insights that we had shared with each other. We learned that the pace of change is not slowing down and that according to our keynote speaker Don Tapscott, one of the world's leading authorities on innovation, media, and the economic and social impact of technology, block chain technology, the underlying technology of bitcoin, will bring even more serious disruptions to all sectors of society including libraries. We learned that more and more library types are converging to serve many purposes. Our former President Claudia Lux informed us that the National Library of Qatar will be a national, public and academic research library all rolled into one. John Szabo and Vickery Bowles discussed their library's transformation to vital learning and creation spaces for their communities where patrons create as well as consume culture. Vickery Bowles, the CEO of the Toronto Public Library system urges us to reimagine our space and to become a place where our community can learn, play and collaborate. We also heard from our Deputy Secretary General, Stuart Hamilton about the need to define a long term sustainable information environment to support information policy advocacy at both the global and national levels. A sustainable information environment needs to provide solutions to the problems that cause inequities such as cost of resources, long term

digital preservation, and barriers to accessing public information. Defining what a sustainable information environment would look like is now a key initiative in the IFLA strategic plan.

To everyone who participated in and supported that meeting and especially to my colleagues in Canada you have my sincere thanks for making the event both enlightening and possible.

IFLA also put out two publications in the last year which tell the story of continuing change and the actions you are taking. Monday IFLA launched the Update of the Trend Report at the President's Session. It highlights the fruits of the discussions you had in your countries on the challenges in your region and some of the actions you are taking to meet those challenges. Speakers at the President's session however, warned us about new challenges presented by the continuing centralization of control of the world wide web but also gave us examples of progress that occurred since the issuing of the last trend report in areas such as automated translation.

The second of these, "Access and Opportunity for All", gives examples that were provided by you of how libraries are contributing to the achievement of each of the 17 goals.

This last week here we shared in person our ongoing work and good practices to transform our libraries and our profession. Numerous session and speakers from every type of library shared their work to bring organizational and policy change in order to build the future that we want. We heard from China, the United States, and Croatia on participatory projects in public libraries that connect collaboration communities. We heard how libraries are focused on taking action for the 2030 agenda from France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada, Croatia and the U.S. and we heard from national libraries of South Africa, Macedonia, South Korea, France and Malawi on how they are contributing towards achievement of the 2030 goals. These are just a few of the examples of sessions, posters and satellite meetings that sought to move the change agenda forward. To all of the planners and the IFLA staff thank you for a job that was very well done.

What I learned over the last year and what we learned here this week is that there is a lot of excellent work going on right now to adapt and renew our libraries and our profession and that we are all working together. It is clear to me that there is no shortage of innovation and action in libraries. What is an issue however is that not every library is aligning with the needs of their community and not every library has a clear vision of what they need to be in the future. I would ask you though, about libraries not represented here. Think about the communities that are being left behind because their libraries are not engaged in building transformative services. We cannot afford to leave any community behind. Users judge all libraries by the standard of service in the one they use and if that library has not changed and evolved it reflects badly on the rest of us. I would ask you how does our good work supporting the change agenda get distributed to the broader library community that is beyond the walls of this conference Center in Columbus.

To have real impact, what went on here must become a movement. Ralph Turner in his Britannica article on social movements defines a Social movement, as a loosely organized but sustained campaign in support of a social goal, typically either the implementation or the prevention of a change in society's structure or values. Although social movements differ in size, they are all essentially collective. That is, they result from

the more or less spontaneous coming together of people whose relationships are not defined by rules and procedures but who merely share a common outlook on society.

That is what I see in front of me as I look out over this audience. I see a loosely organized group of people who share the outlook that libraries continue to be very important to society because libraries can change people's lives. I see people who are capable of creating and implementing the change they want rather than have the changes of others imposed on them. I know that because I saw the fruits of your work reflected in the panels and the discussions. I see a collective that could exercise power to transform library services in libraries worldwide. I think you have the power to inspire and empower others to do what you are doing but it is up to you to determine the how and to take the innovations and creativity that you share here to the next step and IFLA is ready to help to do that. As you heard yesterday from our new Secretary General IFLA is building its own change agenda in order to connect, collaborate and build a stronger library field that is bedrock for the communities it serves. We need, and want your participation so much that we will be coming to you to get your advice, input and a pledge of your participation in this effort.

Working to inspire others to join us in our efforts to transform our libraries and our field requires us knowing that we are part of a larger movement, aligning with organizations that share the same goals and taking a more disciplined and high impact approach to helping other libraries and librarians ensure that their libraries are aligned with the goals of their community, are recognized as engines of development and are funded as key community assets.

I am happy to say that I saw action at this meeting and a commitment to creating positive change. However, we all must keep going. I hope everyone will leave this meeting dedicated to taking at least one action during the next year that will move our profession and our libraries forward. I hope you will each reach out to one library and librarian that is not strongly connected to our field and that you will engage them in this work. By working together, we will create that vision of the future where every library is an excellent library that meets the needs of its community, where every librarian takes joy in knowing that every day they contribute to changing people's lives for the better and where we together as IFLA are deeply engaged in making our field stronger.

Thank you to the IFLA Governing Board, all of our professional leadership, to the leadership and members of all our national associations and especially all of you who were kind enough to invite me to your country to see your work, and to Secretary General and IFLA staff for all that you have done during the last year and I am so looking forward to continuing to work with you all on achieving this important goal.

Last year I promised that the best for us is yet to come and after working with all of you this year I believe that more than ever. So it is with hope for the future and an eagerness for all of us to get back to work that I wish all of you safe travels and I declare this Congress closed.

**Donna Scheeder**

IFLA President