

**International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)**

**PART I - INFORMATIVE TEXT ABOUT THE ROLE AND POSITION OF  
LIBRARIES GENERALLY**

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**PART I - LIBRARIES**

*“Even the most misfitting child  
Who's chanced upon the library's worth,  
Sits with the genius of the Earth  
And turns the key to the whole world.”* Ted Hughes, 1997.

**WHAT IS A LIBRARY?**

A library is a collection of materials, containing information, ideas and works of imagination, organised for use, and staffed by people trained to make them available.

Libraries take many physical forms, ranging from large purpose-built buildings, to rooms in parent institutions, and small temporary structures. Mobile examples include road vehicles, boats, trains, trams and even donkeys and camels.

Their collections range from a few thousand in for example a school library, to several millions. The library experience can range from an evening at the Metropolitan Opera to half an hour at Sesame Street, to the key to an understanding metaphysics.

The term ‘library’ is often taken to equate to ‘public library’. However, there is a huge variety of other kinds of libraries, fulfilling different purposes and serving different client groups.

Most countries have a ‘national library,’ which often has the role of coordinating the network of other kinds of libraries throughout that country, in addition to collecting materials and making them available.

Most countries also have a large network of public libraries. The American Library Association, for example, boasts that the public library network in that country has many times more outlets than McDonalds. The UK network consists of around 5,000 service points.

Educational Institutions, such as universities, colleges and schools all have libraries, serving the educational objectives of their parent bodies. In some countries, it is common for them to be open to the general public. Indeed, in Norway, university libraries have to be open to the public by law. In a small number of countries, notably in Eastern Europe, a large university library also acts as the national library.

Libraries also provide vital services in government departments, research institutes, museums, and in many different environments in the private sector.

Libraries are needed more than ever in an age in which people and communities desperately need to consider alternative points of view and information, to challenge the spin doctors and the mass media, to take control of their own destinies and make up their own minds.

#### **HOW MANY LIBRARIES ARE THERE?**

This is difficult to say but it is estimated that in the area of the current member states of the European Union there are 90,000 libraries. On that basis there must be well over 250,000 around the world. They exist throughout the world even in the least developed countries.

#### **WHAT DO LIBRARIES MAKE AVAILABLE?**

Traditionally libraries have acquired print-based materials, including newspapers, maps, pamphlets, illustrations and many other items as well as books. Despite the popular misconception, they have never confined themselves to books. Indeed, libraries predated the invention of the book, collecting papyrus scrolls (the original Alexandria library was a good example) and manuscripts (the mediaeval monastery libraries, for instance). It was therefore no great leap forward to collect every new medium that contained information as it emerged. All forms of sound and visual recording (for example, gramophone records, cassettes, CDs, videos, and DVDs) quickly joined the collections in many kinds of libraries as they became available. Computer based sources of information were quickly added to the portfolios and there are now many libraries around the world which have very substantial collections of CD ROMs and electronic journals. Many publications are now ‘born digital’ and a good proportion never appear in print form. Where they do, the digital and print versions are increasingly different in content. As a result, there are some libraries which, to the first-time visitor, do not look like the conventional idea of a “library” at all.

It should be noted that there has been a long-term trend towards the creation of global media corporations embracing publications in many different media, created in different countries. Content is much more important than the medium which contains the content. On the other hand for many kinds of media, especially those in the Scientific, Technical and Medical (STM) fields, libraries are a hugely important market segment. An advantage of the application of new technologies recently emerging is the ability to introduce differential pricing in favour of libraries in the developing world. However, there remains substantial cause for concern in the growing concentration of media ownership into fewer, larger corporations. It is increasingly important that libraries collect and make available the output of smaller, more local and specialist publishers.

### **WHAT SERVICES DO THEY PROVIDE?**

This depends very much on the kind of library and the client group or groups it serves. National libraries, for example, usually are required to collect and preserve the national publishing output of the country it serves, making sure that it is available not only for current users, but also for future generations. Typically they also compile the national bibliography of publications, and act as the library of last resort for items, which other libraries in the national library network cannot provide. They are usually assisted in their task of collecting by a legal deposit system, whereby publishers have to make copies of their publications available to them free of charge. They frequently have sophisticated preservation and conservation programmes. Electronic publishing provides many challenges to this aspect of their role. National libraries also often take on the role of making available material published in other countries, especially scientific and technical publications.

Public libraries typically provide services free of charge to anyone who wishes to use them, although lending is often restricted to residents of the locality. Many provide literacy programmes, reader development promotions and act as an information point for the availability of local public services. Typically they collect and preserve a wide range of materials relating to the history and development of the locality. Special services have been developed to serve the needs of particular groups such as children (including story-telling programmes), housebound people, and the visually impaired.

Libraries in education institutions have developed a wide range of services to meet the educational objectives of their parent institutions. School libraries clearly need to support the curriculum, but they also collect books and other materials to encourage reading and spirit of enquiry, as well as to meet the needs of the teachers and administrative staff.

Universities are among the most advanced in terms of developing electronic based services. Many have large collections of electronic journals, as well as sophisticated searching tools available both to students and faculty. Teaching hospitals are often attached to universities. They require sophisticated library services to make available the latest medical research published in a variety of media.

Libraries in the corporate sector have been in the forefront of developing services tailored to meet the needs of individuals or small groups of clients. They profile their users (the employees of the firm) and package information and provide alerting systems to ensure they are aware of the latest information relating to their current research or project. Increasingly they are involved in knowledge management, harnessing the totality of the knowledge available in their company.

### **HOW ARE LIBRARIES FUNDED?**

National Libraries are typically funded by the government from taxes. But in common with most public services around the world, they need to supplement these funds with money raised from a range of sources, including sponsorship, charging for some services, sales of publications, etc. A recent free exhibition put on at the National Library of Australia of library treasures from around the world raised over a million Australian dollars in sales of publications and related merchandise.

Public libraries typically rely on a combination of national and local government funding, increasingly supplemented by charges for some services and sponsorship or project money.

Educational libraries rely primarily on income from their parent institution. But they too are usually encouraged to raise income from a variety of sources. Those in the corporate sector are usually regarded as cost centres contributing to company objectives.

### **DO LIBRARIES WORK TOGETHER?**

Yes. Libraries have a long tradition of networking both within countries and across national boundaries. Most countries have inter-library lending systems whereby books and other documents not in stock may be borrowed to satisfy the needs of a local user. These systems expanded into document delivery systems once photocopying became generally available and electronic document delivery is becoming the norm in some subject areas.

Libraries also collaborate in such areas as collection development to avoid the duplication of expensive works and to ensure comprehensive collections in a region, and in staff training. Consortia of libraries, either of a particular type or in a particular region are developing primarily to negotiate licences for the purchase and use of electronic publications.

Libraries have grasped the opportunities presented by the application of new technologies to revolutionise the technical processes required to deliver services. Examples include shared cataloguing, whereby many libraries share the task of preparing catalogue records so that duplication of effort is avoided. Other examples include self-issue and return systems, and security measures.

A recent trend is the convergence of the so-called memory institutions, including some kinds of libraries, archives and museums. One objective is to take advantage of new technologies to make available the collection of all three types of institutions to users in one of them, or indeed remotely from all of them

### **HOW ARE LIBRARIANS TRAINED?**

In most countries librarians are educated in universities in what used to be called 'library schools' at undergraduate, masters and doctorate level, depending largely on the overall educational tradition in the country or region. This is supplemented by periods of practical training and experience. In some countries this leads to a licence to practise. In others, the courses themselves are accredited by the professional body. The curriculum includes studies of information science, computer based information systems, electronic publishing, legal considerations, including intellectual property laws and understanding user needs, as well as the more traditional subjects such as reference sources, cataloguing, indexing and classification. Specialist, optional programmes treat serving user groups such as children, the visually impaired, those with learning disabilities, and specific industries, etc.

### **DO WE NEED LIBRARIES NOW THAT WE HAVE THE INTERNET?**

Yes. Although a great deal of information is available on the desk top of anyone with a computer linked to the Internet, much of it is spurious and disorganized. Some of it is of course dangerous. Much of the information that is authoritative is available only in return for payment. Thus users need to access materials through libraries which have skilled staff to search efficiently, are able to identify authentic sites and can obtain access to paid-for sources through site licences.

**And finally .....**

***“The information superhighway should not just benefit the affluent or the metropolitan. Just as in the past books were a chance for ordinary people to better themselves, in the future online education will be a route to better prospects. But just as books are available from public libraries, the benefits of the superhighway must be there for everyone. This is a real chance for equality of opportunity...”***

**Tony Blair, New Britain: My Vision of a Young Country (1996)**

Quotations are taken from *New library; the people's network*. London: Library and Information Commission, 1998.

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## **PART II - The IFLA Internet Manifesto**

*Unhindered access to information is essential to freedom, equality, global understanding and peace. Therefore, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) asserts that:*

- *Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual both to hold and express opinions and to seek and receive information; it is the basis of democracy; and it is at the core of library service.*
- *Freedom of access to information, regardless of medium and frontiers, is a central responsibility of the library and information profession.*
- *The provision of unhindered access to the Internet by libraries and information services supports communities and individuals to attain freedom, prosperity and development.*
- *Barriers to the flow of information should be removed, especially those that promote inequality, poverty, and despair.*

### **Freedom of Access to Information, the Internet and Libraries and Information Services**

Libraries and information services are vibrant institutions that connect people with global information resources and the ideas and creative works they seek. Libraries and information services make available the richness of human expression and cultural diversity in all media.

The global Internet enables individuals and communities throughout the world, whether in the smallest and most remote villages or the largest cities, to have equality of access to information for personal development, education, stimulation, cultural enrichment, economic activity and informed participation in democracy. All can present their interests, knowledge and culture for the world to visit.

Libraries and information services provide essential gateways to the Internet. For some they offer convenience, guidance, and assistance, while for others they are the only available access points. They provide a mechanism to overcome the barriers created by differences in resources, technology, and training.

### **Principles of Freedom of Access to Information via the Internet**

Access to the Internet and all of its resources should be consistent with the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and especially *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.*

The global interconnectedness of the Internet provides a medium through which this right may be enjoyed by all. Consequently, access should neither be subject to any form of ideological, political or religious censorship, nor to economic barriers.

Libraries and information services also have a responsibility to serve all of the members of their communities, regardless of age, race, nationality, religion, culture, political affiliation, physical or other disabilities, gender or sexual orientation, or any other status.

Libraries and information services should support the right of users to seek information of their choice.

Libraries and information services should respect the privacy of their users and recognize that the resources they use should remain confidential.

Libraries and information services have a responsibility to facilitate and promote public access to quality information and communication. Users should be assisted with the necessary skills and a suitable environment in which to use their chosen information sources and services freely and confidently.

In addition to the many valuable resources available on the Internet, some are incorrect, misleading and may be offensive. Librarians should provide the information and resources for library users to learn to use the Internet and electronic information efficiently and effectively. They should proactively promote and facilitate responsible access to quality networked information for all their users, including children and young people.

In common with other core services, access to the Internet in libraries and information services should be without charge.

### ***Implementing the Manifesto***

IFLA encourages the international community to support the development of Internet accessibility worldwide, and especially in developing countries, to thus obtain the global benefits of information for all offered by the Internet.

IFLA encourages national governments to develop a national information infrastructure which will deliver Internet access to all the nation's population.



IFLA encourages all governments to support the unhindered flow of Internet accessible information via libraries and information services and to oppose any attempts to censor or inhibit access.

IFLA urges the library community and decision makers at national and local levels to develop strategies, policies, and plans that implement the principles expressed in this Manifesto.

*This Manifesto was prepared by IFLA/FAIFE.*

*Approved by the Governing Board of IFLA 27 March 2002, The Hague, Netherlands.*

**Proclaimed by IFLA 1 May 2002.**

## **The Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom**

Meeting in Glasgow on the occasion of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its formation, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) declares that:

IFLA proclaims the fundamental right of human beings both to access and to express information without restriction.

IFLA and its worldwide membership support, defend and promote intellectual freedom as expressed in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This intellectual freedom encompasses the wealth of human knowledge, opinion, creative thought and intellectual activity.

IFLA asserts that a commitment to intellectual freedom is a core responsibility of the library and information profession worldwide, expressed through codes of ethics and demonstrated through practice.

IFLA affirms that:

- 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.
- Libraries and information services 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 and to opposing any form of censorship.
- Libraries and information services shall acquire, preserve and make available the widest variety of materials, reflecting the plurality and diversity of society. The selection and availability of library materials and services shall be governed by professional considerations and not by political, moral and religious views.
- Libraries and information services shall make materials, facilities and services equally accessible to all users. There shall be no discrimination for any reason including race, national or ethnic origin, gender or sexual preference, age, disability, religion, or political beliefs.
- Libraries and information services shall protect each user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.

IFLA therefore calls upon libraries and information services and their staff to uphold and promote the principles of intellectual freedom and to provide uninhibited access to information.

*This Declaration was prepared by IFLA/FAIFE.  
Approved by the Governing Board of IFLA 27 March 2002, The Hague, Netherlands.  
**Proclaimed by the Council of IFLA 19 August 2002, Glasgow, Scotland.***

### **PART III** - IFLA and IFLA/FAIFE

*IFLA (The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions), founded in 1927, is the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users. It is the global voice of the library and information profession.*

*IFLA is an independent, international, non-governmental, not-for-profit organization. Our aims are to promote high standards of provision and delivery of library and information services, encourage widespread understanding of the value of good library and information services, and represent the interests of our members throughout the world*

*In pursuing these aims IFLA embraces the following core values:*

- *We believe that people, communities and organizations need for their physical, mental, democratic and economic well-being, unhindered access to information, ideas and works of imagination*
- *We believe that the provision and delivery of high quality library and information services help guarantee that access*
- *We are committed to enabling library associations and institutions throughout the world, and their staff, to participate in the work of the Federation regardless of geographical location*
- *We support and promote the principles of freedom of access to information ideas and works of imagination embodied in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*
- *We recognize the rights of all members to engage in, and benefit from, its activities without regard to citizenship, ethnic origin, gender, language, political philosophy, race or religion.*

*IFLA/FAIFE (Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression) is a core activity within IFLA (International Federation of Library Association and Institutions) to defend and promote the basic human rights defined in [Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#).*

*The IFLA/FAIFE Committee and Office further unhindered access to information and freedom of expression in all aspects, directly or indirectly, related to libraries and information services and the practice of information professionals. IFLA/FAIFE monitors the state of intellectual freedom within the library community worldwide, supports IFLA policy development and cooperation with other international human rights organisations, and responds to violations of access to information and freedom of expression.*

***Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both hold and express opinions and to seek and receive information.***

***Intellectual freedom is the basis of democracy.***

***Intellectual freedom is at the core of libraries and information services.***