
Document WSIS-05/TUNIS/CONTR/14-E
11 November 2005
Original: English

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)

Alexandria Manifesto on Libraries, the Information Society in Action

Libraries and information services are essential to the sound operation of the inclusive Information Society. Their impartial operation helps to safeguard universal civil rights. Libraries enable intellectual freedom by providing access to information, ideas and works of imagination in any medium and regardless of frontiers.

The unique feature of libraries and information services is that they respond to the particular questions and needs of individuals. They complement the general transmission of knowledge by the media and other means. Libraries are vital to the democratic and open Information Society in which they facilitate well informed citizenry, transparent governance and e-government. They build capacity by promoting information literacy and providing support and training for effective use of digital and other information resources. In these ways, libraries contribute significantly to addressing the digital divide and the information inequality that results from it. Because of the centrality of knowledge to economic progress libraries are critical to the development agenda and help to realise the Millennium Development Goals, including reduction of poverty. They will do more with modest additional support, returning at least 4-6 times the investment.

To enable access to information by all peoples, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) 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 and libraries and information services share the common vision of an Information Society for all adopted by the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva in November 2003. That vision promotes an inclusive society in which everyone will be able to create, access, use and share information and knowledge.

IFLA urges national, regional and local governments as well as international organisations to invest in library and information services as vital elements of their Information Society strategies. The greatest possible benefits for citizens and communities by upgrading and extending existing library networks and

- supporting unrestricted access to information and freedom of expression;
- promoting open access to information and address structural and other barriers to access; and
- recognising the importance of information literacy and vigorously support strategies to create a literate and skilled populace which can advance and benefit from the global Information Society.

Adopted in Alexandria, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, on 11 November 2005