

Alexandria Manifesto on Libraries, the Information Society in Action

Libraries and information services contribute to the sound operation of the inclusive Information Society.

They enable intellectual freedom by providing access to information, ideas and works of imagination in any medium and regardless of frontiers.

They help to safeguard democratic values and universal civil rights impartially and by opposing any form of censorship.

The unique role of libraries and information services is that they respond to the particular questions and needs of individuals. This complements the general transmission of knowledge by the media, for example, and makes libraries and information services vital to a democratic and open Information Society. Libraries are essential for a well informed citizenry and transparent governance, as well as for the take-up of e-government.

They also build capacity by promoting information literacy and providing support and training for effective use of information resources, including Information and Communication Technologies. This is especially critical in promoting the development agenda because human resources are central to economic progress. In these ways libraries contribute significantly to addressing the digital divide and the information inequality that results from it. They help to make the Millennium Development Goals a reality, including reduction of poverty. They will do more with quite modest investments. The value of the return is at least 4-6 times the investment.

In pursuit of the goal of access to information by all peoples, IFLA supports balance and fairness in copyright. IFLA is also vitally concerned to promote multilingual content, cultural diversity and the special needs of Indigenous peoples and minorities.

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 December 2003. That vision promotes an inclusive society based on the fundamental right of human beings both to access and to express information without restriction and 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 in their Information Society strategies, policies and budgets;
- upgrade and extend existing library networks to obtain the greatest possible benefits for their citizens and communities;
- support unrestricted access to information and freedom of expression;
- promote open access to information and address structural and other barriers to access; and
- recognise 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, Egypt, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, on 11 November 2005

(<http://www.ifla.org/III/wsis/AlexandriaManifesto.html>)