

THE IFLA INTERNET MANIFESTO

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On 1 May 2002, the *IFLA Internet Manifesto* was launched. Through it, 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.

The *Manifesto* continues by establishing principles of freedom of access to information via the Internet and noting the need to develop strategies, policies, and plans to implement the *Manifesto*. It aims to highlight the importance of unhindered access to information to help communities and individuals to attain freedom, prosperity and development.

The *Manifesto* emphasises the role of libraries and information services in facilitating that access as essential gateways to the Internet. They provide a mechanism to overcome the barriers created by differences in resources, technology, and training – the digital divide. National libraries, in particular, play an important role through encouraging the establishment of appropriate infrastructures and assisting library to develop and implement plans to facilitate access to information via the Internet.

The *IFLA Internet Manifesto* was developed by IFLA/FAIFE in consultation with IFLA members and approved by the Governing Board. IFLA/FAIFE is now instigating a worldwide program to implement the ideals expressed in the Manifesto.

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.

