

The Role of IFLA: Serving Libraries, Creating Bridges and Serving Societies.

- Antonia ARAHOVA¹

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) 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 and aims to :

- Promote high standards of provision and delivery of library and information services
- Encourage widespread understanding of the value of good library & information services
- Represent the interests of our members throughout the world.

IFLA fosters positive change for libraries and their communities by developing tools and providing guidance to help library advocates influence crucial decisions taken at a national, local or institutional level. Libraries are key institutions for changing people's lives as our past President Donna Scheeder repeatedly was saying. IFLA supports national and regional advocacy. Personally I deeply appreciate the work of the national library associations worldwide and I want to congratulate the Nepal Library Association and all the librarians of the country for the amazing job they are doing often under difficult circumstances.

Over the last few years, IFLA has been actively involved with the creation of the UN 2030 Agenda, advocating for the inclusion of access to information, safeguarding of cultural heritage, universal literacy, and access to information and communication technologies (ICT) in the framework. In August 2015, after more than three years of negotiations and intense involvement from many stakeholders, including IFLA, the Member States of the United Nations agreed to a final version of the post-2015 Development Agenda – now known as the 2030 Agenda. This Agenda was adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at a historic UN Summit. IFLA focus on the power of libraries in all the regions in implementing UN SDGs creating bridges and serving the good of Societies empowering the International Relations network.

IFLA has the unique role of engaging with global and international organizations on behalf of the library field. By bringing together library voices from around the world, IFLA

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is well positioned to highlight what libraries offer toward achieving international priorities, and the resources required to do so. Through this, IFLA works to pass or improve laws, shape recommendations and declarations, and launch projects and programs. By ensuring the inclusion of libraries in the work produced by international organizations, IFLA can help to ensure that governments and decision-makers at all levels clearly see the need for strong libraries, everywhere.

The end goal is to provide library associations, libraries and library and information professionals with opportunities, arguments and evidence to support progress in their contexts.

At UNESCO, IFLA engages across a wide range of topics, reflecting the variety of ways in which libraries contribute to societies – from documentary heritage (via the Memory of the World program) to open science, anti-trafficking and media and information literacy.

At the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), IFLA leads in making the case for cross-border legal action, to ensure libraries everywhere have the laws they need to carry out their missions in a digital, globalised world.

IFLA also works with other international organizations and bodies, such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Internet Governance Forum, and the World Summit on the Information Society.

The IFLA Action for Development through Libraries Program (IFLA ALP) works in collaboration with libraries, library associations, partner organizations and library professionals in developing and emerging countries to foster equitable access to information and better library communities. IFLA ALP delivers community-led change through its training programs, online learning activities, and access to IFLA's international network. IFLA ALP is based on a platform of policies and standards developed and endorsed by IFLA at the international level, and local priorities at the grassroots level. IFLA ALP delivers the Building Strong Library Associations (BSLA) program.

This is connected with the 4 pillars described in IFLA's Strategy: inspire, engage, enable and connect.

IFLA listens to and understands the priorities of the whole field, and amplifies the message through advocating for libraries and their values on a global and regional level. IFLA speak with insight, confidence and authority on relevant policies, ensuring that libraries are recognized and supported as critical community assets essential to achieving development agendas. That's why the Key Initiatives which IFLA has launched focus specific areas as:

1.1 Show the power of libraries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

As a basis for effective library advocacy, IFLA will produce high quality, high impact tools that demonstrate to external audiences the contribution of libraries to development in all of its dimensions.

1.2 Build a strong presence in international organizations and meetings as a valued partner.

IFLA will strengthen our links with key international institutions, in order to shape laws, guidance and programs which benefit libraries. IFLA will adopt a strategic, long-term approach, and build our reputation as an essential partner.

1.3 Work with library associations and libraries to identify key legal and funding challenges to their work, and advocate for action

Collaborating closely with members, IFLA will strengthen the understanding and ability to deliver support for advocacy in priority areas at national and regional levels, including literacy, learning, reading, innovation, and access to knowledge and heritage. IFLA will deliver on this through direct engagement, guidance, and high-quality advocacy materials.

1.4 Shape public opinion and debate around open access and library values, including intellectual freedom and human rights

IFLA will provide practical and intellectual leadership to support open access and the broader values of our field. The aim is to facilitate an understanding of libraries' role as champions of intellectual freedom, encourage reflection, coordinate action, and advocate externally.

My personal promise is to try to create synergies through collaboration canals enforcing the inclusion and the voice of every single library. And for the end sending my greetings to the colleagues in the beautiful country of Nepal, I quote **Jennifer Donnelly** '*Namaste. It was a Nepalese greeting. It meant: The light within me bows to the light within you*' **with the wish the light of culture and cooperation to spread all around.**