

IFLA's Professional Priorities

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is a worldwide, independent, non-governmental organization. The purposes of the Federation as stated in its Statutes are “to promote high standards of delivery of library and information services; to encourage widespread understanding of the value and importance of high quality library and information services in the private, public and voluntary sectors; and to represent the interests of its Members throughout the world.” The Professional Priorities outlined in this document will provide guidance in the development of IFLA’s professional activities. These priorities are to be incorporated into the professional programmes throughout IFLA’s organizational structure, recognizing especially that the needs, concerns and views of every region of the world are to be taken into account, particularly those in the developing world. Regional concerns, communication and information exchange among IFLA’s members, and the use of electronic technology to facilitate the implementation of its priorities underpin all of these professional priorities.

Supporting the Role of Libraries in Society

IFLA supports the establishment and maintenance of libraries by serving as an international advocate to ensure that the vital role of libraries in the digital age is well understood and acted upon. IFLA lobbies on behalf of libraries with government officials and community leaders, using all available avenues to secure appropriate funding and staffing of library services worldwide.

Defending the Principle of Freedom of Information

IFLA believes that all people have a fundamental right to create and acquire information and to express their views publicly. The right to know and the freedom to express are two aspects of the same principle.

Libraries play a key role in securing these rights, and IFLA supports this role by defending the ability of libraries to acquire, organize, preserve and make available the widest variety of materials, reflecting plurality and diversity in the society, and thus to protect and enhance democracy and a free debate; by defending the ability of libraries to ensure that selection and availability of material and services are governed by professional principles, not the political, moral or religious views of individuals or governments; and by defending the ability of libraries to make materials and services available to all users, with no discrimination due to race, creed, gender, religion, age or any other subjective reason.

Promoting Literacy, Reading, and Lifelong Learning

IFLA's programmes promote literacy in many aspects, helping libraries worldwide to develop programmes that support increased literacy for all people, including basic literacy (the ability to use, understand and apply print, writing, speech and visual information in order to communicate and interact effectively), reading (the ability to decipher print and other forms of notation, to understand written language and its construction, and to comprehend the meaning of the written word), information literacy (the ability to formulate and analyze an information need; to identify and appraise sources; to locate, retrieve, organize and store information; to interpret, analyze, synthesize and evaluate that information critically; and to evaluate whether the information need has been satisfied) and lifelong learning (providing for the needs of all learners, whether formal or informal, helping to raise the aspirations and achievements of individuals of all ages and abilities).

Providing Unrestricted Access to Information

IFLA seeks to influence political and economic decisions that have an ethical impact on access to information so that all persons throughout the world have the same opportunity to participate in the information society without regard to physical, regional, social, or cultural barriers. Ongoing technological progress seems to widen the gap between the information rich and the information poor world-wide. IFLA supports programmes which provide support for information access in developing regions of the world.

Balancing the Intellectual Property Rights of Authors with the Needs of Users

IFLA assumes a dual responsibility, both to the producers of intellectual property and to libraries as representatives of information users, because safeguarding and providing access to products of the mind are fundamental to the growth of knowledge.

IFLA works to protect the rights of authors and the role of libraries by playing an active role with organizations such as WIPO and UNESCO in the drafting of appropriate treaties and legislative models which recognize the dichotomy between the rights of authors and the needs of users.

IFLA also works to assure that intellectual property rights support the universal availability of information by such activities as encouraging national legislation for legal deposit and assuring the right of libraries to make copies of published documents in a manner consistent with principles of fair use. Safeguarding these rights must involve both the owners of intellectual property and its users. It necessitates working in collaboration with authors, publishers and librarians.

Promoting Resource Sharing

IFLA serves as an international forum and advocate for sharing information in all its forms across national borders. It promotes the communication of bibliographic information which is the basis for all resource sharing, it works to develop cooperative principles for international lending, and it supports a voucher scheme to liberate lending reimbursements from national currencies. IFLA works to encourage the sharing of resources, by supporting traditional lending and document delivery, by promoting the communication and easy exchange of bibliographic information, and by encouraging the development of virtual libraries whose holdings will be accessible without regard to geography or national boundaries.

Preserving Our Intellectual Heritage

Although responsibility for the preservation and conservation of the intellectual heritage in their custody is ultimately the responsibility of individual libraries, IFLA works to promote the establishment of regional, national and international priorities and the application of the best scientific knowledge in the fulfillment of this responsibility. One of IFLA's primary activities is to ensure appropriate coordination at the international level through programmes such as advocacy, training and the development and dissemination of standards and best practices.

IFLA also participates in international activities related to disaster preparedness and recovery.

Developing Library Professionals

IFLA works to strengthen the abilities and knowledge of library and information science professionals and paraprofessionals throughout the world in order to improve service to the user. Programmes supported by IFLA encompass all educational processes, including library and information science curricula and continuing education activities such as lectures, seminars, workshops and in-service training.

Promoting Standards, Guidelines, and Best Practices

IFLA actively promotes standards, guidelines and best practices to provide guidance to libraries throughout the world in how to perform core functions well, and in many cases how to perform them in the same manner. The latter is particularly important in areas such as electronic communications where conformity with clear, established and widely accepted and understood standards is indispensable for the exchange of information in cost-effective ways.

Supporting the Infrastructure of Library Associations

IFLA supports the infrastructure of library associations, especially in countries and regions where these are poorly developed, because they provide the essential means for accomplishing IFLA's goals at the national level. Library associations provide many valuable services to librarians. They work to develop effective library programmes and services that meet the needs of library users and advance societal objectives and interests, ensuring public access to information, and preserving and protecting cultural resources.

Representing Libraries in the Technological Marketplace

IFLA serves as an international advocate for libraries and their users, seeking to influence the development of technology in the world marketplace, especially technology that controls the flow and availability of information. IFLA represents both the sophisticated interests of high-tech libraries and the practical concerns of more traditional users. It negotiates on behalf of libraries (and for the benefit of library users) in discussions on international trade and telecommunications, and it also works to encourage the development of affordable technologies that will bring information to all the populations of the world.