

President Glòria Pérez-Salmerón: WLIC 2018 Closing Session speech



Thank you!

Thank you for such warm applause.

I know that it not only for me. It's also for all of the people who have put together such a great programme over the last week.

Such great sessions, such important insights, such productive meetings.

Our Secretary General, Gerald Leitner.

The IFLA Staff.

The officers and members of our over sixty professional units – the neurons in IFLA's brains trust – our sections and special interest groups.

Thank you to them.

And I would like to ask for your applause again.

This time for each other. For making this Congress such a success.

I have said this so many times during this conference, but the more inclusive, more effective IFLA we are building together is based on you.

You are our energy source. Our brains trust. Our living, breathing, Ideas Store. You make IFLA. You are IFLA.

I need to give special thanks of course to the Diputació de Barcelona, the Provincial Council of Barcelona.

They are my employer, and it is thanks to them that I can devote so much time to representing IFLA, to getting to know the global library field.

To understanding your needs, your ambitions, your hopes. And to working with you to change mindsets, build momentum, to make change happen.

This past year has been full of such opportunities.

I have had the chance to visit libraries and meet librarians from five continents of the world: Africa, Asia, Nord America, Latin-American and the Caribbean and Europe.

Global Vision Workshops, Convenings, and of course National Library Conferences and events have brought me to seventeen countries.

Austria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, France, Iran, Jamaica, Japan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, Spain, the USA, and Vietnam.

I have participated remotely in conferences in Argentina, Croatia, Czech Republic, India, Pakistan and Paraguay.

My family almost seem surprised to see me at home sometimes!

And what have I been doing during these visits?

Clearly, as President of IFLA, my first duty is to our Members. I have met so many of you. So many passionate, committed people.

People who do not need to be convinced that libraries are the motors of change. They have been doing it for years. They are the proof. And they are the future.

But as you will have heard in my President's Session, the IFLA President has a unique position.

One foot in the library field, one foot outside.

The President must be an Ambassador as much as a leader. They must advocate for libraries to non-librarians.

Bring our collective voices together and make the case for our institutions.

So I have also talked with ministers, officials and diplomats. From the United Nations to local authorities.

And at these meetings this, I have argued that libraries need to be at the heart of national development agendas. And they need the resources, the laws, the stability to fulfil their mission in their communities.

I have underlined, "What you invest in libraries, you receive many times in return, when you support libraries you support communities, when you pass laws for libraries, you pass laws for your people".

This is a crucial point.

I'm not an English native speaker, my mother language is Spanish, and I speak Catalan with my own family.

But I know very well that we librarians, librarians all over the world, we speak the same language, the language of access to information.

We share the knowledge that access to information – education, research, health information, information for jobs, culture, government transparency – whatever you call it – improves lives and improves societies.

And that this access must be meaningful.

I'm living in Barcelona.

Barcelona is proud to call itself a 'Smart City'. It is where the World Mobile Congress has held every year since 2006.

For me, the clearest sign that Barcelona is really smart is when I read the results of the Municipal Services Survey and see that people value Barcelona's Libraries as the best public Service of the city.

This is so powerful for me. I hope your communities would say the same!

Because, as I said in Jamaica in the opening of Global Media and Information Literacy Week: access to information cannot be meaningful if it is just about cables, computers, or cell-phones.

Access must include the ability to understand, apply, and create information and this requires support - education, training, advice or simply hand-holding- because in the end, it is down to the individual.

Each individual needs to have the knowledge and skill, the attitudes and confidence necessary to navigate the information they face.

There are no smart cities without smart citizens.

And this – meaningful access to information – is what libraries make possible.

I have another year of my term. But I'm only getting started.

I have been energised by the Global Vision. The amazing number of participants across seven continents. The fact that we are united in our goals and values. What I have heard, and seen, in our regional workshops.

I have been energised by what you, what your colleagues, have been doing to advocate for libraries around the world. Your inventiveness. Your tenacity. Your arguments.

I am convinced that we are the beginning of a movement.

A new wave of library advocates around the world, demanding that libraries be recognised and supported as drivers of development.

As providers of literacy. As the backbone of research networks. As educators. As a first source of help for those who need it most.

Showing the way. And bringing others with you.

Every librarian an advocate!

But also every librarian a member. A pillar. A node within the emerging united global library field.

I am so much looking forward to meeting more of you over the coming year. Seeing what you're doing, hearing about your plans. Reading your ideas in the Ideas Store.

Because I am an idealist.

I'm not ashamed to be idealistic. We have to be idealistic in our goals, and show the way towards a better, more sustainable world.

And this is what we are building, a better world.

Not only with nice words, but through concrete steps to build a stronger, more inclusive IFLA. A trusted voice, a strong voice, a reference point for us all.

An IFLA – an IFLA of all of us – that can make change happen, can make progress happen through meaningful access to information.

As I said last Sunday in the President's Session libraries are not victims of change.

They should just not have to sprint to keep up with it. They can drive it.

To do this, the motors of change have to move up a gear.

We have to trust in ourselves, in our own power, and the super power of us – the members of the big IFLA family.

Recognise and celebrate success, learn from it, and go further.

Working together, working for our users, working for a better world.

Thank you and see you in Athens.