



Report of the Secretary General

I will give you in the next 15 minutes a glimpse into IFLA's future.

What are the major challenges?

Economic crisis and again growing inequality

We are worldwide confronted with an again growing social inequality and the ongoing global economic crisis. And it is by far not over yet. It affects our whole society, libraries, library associations and IFLA.

In many countries the economic crisis has also become a crisis for libraries. I have spoken with many colleagues from different countries. They tell me that budgets are cut down drastically and many other services are being reduced.

Library associations getting problems in collecting membership fees and this will affect also IFLA.

However, complaining is senseless.

In this situation, it is our responsibility as representatives of IFLA, to make politicians aware of the possibilities that libraries have to offer, and furthermore to do our utmost, to set "Libraries on the Agenda" – in every single country.

We have to convince politicians that libraries are a vital ingredient in counter-acting some of the most demoralizing aspects of the current financial crisis and that public investment in libraries shows a sense of civic responsibility to overcome the again worldwide growing inequality. We have to show that "Libraries make a difference"

And I am totally sure in this room are sitting exactly those people who are able to give the answer - and we will give a powerful answer together!

The rapid development of the information society and the transformation of the media and publishing markets

The rapid development of the information society and the transformation of the media and publishing markets present both enormous opportunities and risks for libraries, library associations and IFLA. The Internet is disrupting every media industry – especially the publishing industry. It's disrupting the whole book distribution chain.

The challenge that – for example - Amazon is bringing to the traditional actors in the business of books is its aim of covering each and every part of the entire sector by its own offer.

It's challenging the basic business model of the book industry for over 200 years – and it's challenging the libraries: Kindle unlimited offering 800.000 e-books for lending at a flat-rate. This means libraries are confronted the first time in their history with a commercial competitor – a global acting commercial competitor.

In my opinion, one of the most important challenges for all libraries is the transformation of the media and information market. – We need to find answers! And we will find answers together!

Globalisation

The ever-increasing intensity of globalisation affects more and more areas of our professional lives:

I will speak tomorrow at the PE Session about libraries and globalization. Here will give you only some examples.

ICT Companies, media and publishing houses acting worldwide: sometimes as vendors for and sometimes as competitors with libraries.

We facing more and more International Trade Agreements which influence copyright laws, but maybe also influence public funding for libraries.

The UN or the European Union defining goals and strategies which are of enormous importance for libraries.

We all know: Copyright depends on supranational agreements affecting the work of local libraries

Worldwide answers and strategies are needed!

I am deeply convinced in the face of the ever-increasing intensity of globalisation a powerful, worldwide acting IFLA is needed more than ever.

But I am also totally convinced we will only be able to tackle these challenges with the global cooperation of all types of libraries, library associations and IFLA.

We have to join our forces and we have to find answers together in an inclusive and participatory way – where all voices are heard!

A clear vision

We need an answer to the rapidly growing globalization – a global answer!

Therefore, IFLA will develop a global vision for a strong and connected library field able to adapt to and meet the continually evolving needs of library users.

We will develop it together with you:

It will be your vision.

In the first half of 2017, IFLA will organize workshops in all regions of the world inviting library associations and professional units to the table.

And it will include a variety of ways for IFLA members and the larger library field to participate at the national or regional level or through IFLA unit involvement.

An online discussion will supplement the various in-person discussions either through regional meetings or in meetings of IFLA's professional units.

We will have the first time a real global discussion! And as I said before we will do it an inclusive and participatory way, which will strengthen the relationship between IFLA members, its units and the HQ and will create a powerful answer of the united global library sector to the challenges of the future.

Bringing the vision to reality: Going to and strengthening the regions

There are a considerable number of actions needed to reach our goals. One of the most important is to strengthen the regions.

I have learned my lessons as chair of MLAS and IFLA-ALP.

We have to know and to identify the needs, wishes and demands of the different regions.

We have to develop tailored strategies for each region with concrete operational plans for defined periods – and we have to create them in partnership with the regions.

All vision discussions in 2017 will take place in the regions and just one year later – in 2018 – we will return and organize regional meetings to create programs to fulfil the vision in their regions aligned with global goals and perspectives.

We will initiate a consultative process that ensures that regions and professional units participate in identifying key priorities and help IFLA to develop the most fitting and optimal support for the library community.

Powerful Advocacy: From the work of a handful experts to a worldwide movement

In a world that has become a global village, no library is an island.

The most important issues for libraries and their users are negotiated today at the international level, but effecting fundamentally the work of local libraries.

This is why it is so important to have a strong international library representation at international bodies such as the World Intellectual Property Office (WIPO) for copyright issues or the United Nations.

Today, this work is mostly done by a handful of outstanding experts of IFLA at the international bodies

As important and strong as IFLA's experts are acting, it is not enough to advocate at the international level alone.

These efforts have to be backed up regionally and nationally. The support of national library associations and national libraries is crucial.

We have to work closely, hand-in-hand to ensure that we maximise our advocacy efforts.

Therefore, we will go in the regions, organize workshops with leaders of Library Associations and National Libraries, to train them, creating an advocacy and operational plans for their countries and regions in line with IFLA's advocacy goals.

We will do this through our International Advocacy Programme: Organizing advocacy workshops regarding the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the regions during the next months, additionally offering funds and support for advocacy projects as well as bringing leaders from all the regions to global convenings of the UN, UNESCO, WIPO—to New York, Paris and Geneva.

We will connect our experts stronger with the Library associations and create a powerful advocacy network.

Each and every one of us performing advocacy activities knows that the basis for successful advocacy is accurate and comprehensive information.

If we want to organise successful advocacy measures for libraries, we will need all relevant information about libraries.

Anyone seeking comprehensive information on libraries worldwide might be surprised to find that such an information pool does not exist on the IFLA website.

This, in my opinion, is unacceptable.

Libraries claim to provide free access to any kind of information to all citizens, but at the same time we are not able to provide all relevant information about libraries on our website.

We have to change: IFLA has to become the definitive Knowledge and Information Centre for and about the entire library, information and documentation sector.

Therefore, we start to create a Library Map of the World showing the potential of the global library field.

A powerful advocacy tool on national, regional and global level.

Communication is the key: We want to know what you want!

Following closely the global vision conversations, next year IFLA will conduct its first comprehensive membership survey in order to better understand what our associations and individuals value in their engagement with IFLA. For us it's extremely important to understand both what institutions and associations value in their IFLA membership as well as what is valued by individuals who volunteer their time and expertise to IFLA efforts.

We will launch the survey next year at the WLIC in Wrocław, Poland.

As I said: Communication is the key: We are going to invest financial as well as human resources in our communication. We are going to organize global meetings for all chairs and secretaries of all our professional units and regional meetings for all library associations.

And we are going to hire staff for permanent communication and support for our professional units, library associations and members

If you know excellent people in your country for these jobs – please encourage them to apply.

All these efforts have the aim to transform IFLA into a more inclusive and participatory organization.

IFLA: that's not only a Headquarters with 20 hard-working people in The Hague –

First and foremost, you are IFLA:

A powerful network of 120 national associations and over 1300 members from nearly 140 countries with enormous potential for cooperation, as well as national, regional and global advocacy.

IFLA is the biggest, most exciting, incomparable brain trust in the library community with more than 1.200 experts from all library types working in 64 sections, special interest groups and strategic programmes on issues that concern all library staff and library users. – setting standards and bringing innovation to the field.

I am so proud to work for you as your new Secretary General and I am totally convinced with your help – together – we will accomplish our ambitious goals. And the future is ours!

IFLA, that's you!

Gerald Leitner

IFLA Secretary General