



Strengthening Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development: Libraries as Key Partners

Why are libraries key partners for strengthening science and technology development?

- **Because libraries provide access to the Internet:** Regular, stable, and reliable access to the Internet — and help in using it — generates opportunities to create, share, and benefit from new knowledge in STEM fields¹. Libraries provide public Internet access to all, especially those without broadband or a smart phone.
- **Because libraries can be partners in national development plans:** When national development policies aim to improve telecommunications and provide high-speed broadband networks in support of Goal 17, libraries are natural partners for the provision of public access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and networked information resources².
- **Because the infrastructure already exists:** UN Member States have a vast network of libraries in their countries that can provide this access: there are 320,000 public libraries worldwide, and tens of thousands of national, university, science and research libraries.
- **Because the benefits of partnering with libraries are cross-cutting:** If governments invest in public access to ICTs they will be providing support for all SDGs by increasing people's access to information, as well as supporting citizen engagement and participation in the post-2015 process.
- **Because libraries offer more than just access:** people need to have media and information literacy (MIL) skills in order to fully participate in an inclusive Information Society – libraries provide MIL training and expertise³.
- **Because innovative governments are already investing in libraries:** Poland, Botswana, Rwanda, Colombia are just a handful of countries whose citizens have benefitted from government investment in public access to ICTs through libraries.
- **Because we should think bigger and invest smarter in our communities:** maker spaces, Fab Labs, places to learn coding – libraries are already being used to support these activities, and this sort of support can increase access to STEM opportunities at local levels.

Member States should utilise libraries in national development plans to: ensure that public access to ICTs and the benefits of science and technology are available to all.

¹ Internet Access and Public Libraries: An Investment in Digital Inclusion and Twenty-First Century Skills (Beyond Access brief, 2012): <http://beyondaccess.net/resources/internet-access-and-public-libraries-an-investment-in-digital-inclusion-and-twenty-first-century-skills/>

² IFLA Statement on Libraries and Development (IFLA, 2013): www.ifla.org/publications/ifla-statement-on-libraries-and-development

³ WSIS+10 Statement on the Implementation of the WSIS Outcomes (ITU, 2014): www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/2014/forum/inc/doc/outcome/362828V2E.pdf

Recognition for the value of libraries and public access to ICTs in science and technology development

WSIS+10 Statement on the Implementation of the WSIS Outcomes (2014)⁴

The original WSIS documents recognise the value of libraries as providers of public access to ICTs⁵. In 2014 the WSIS+10 High Level Event invited the UN system organisations, UN Member States and all stakeholders to recognise need for additional action on affordable access to ICTs, the promotion of access for all to public access to knowledge, including open access to scientific information; and the need for people to have media and information skills. Supporting providers of public access in the local communities such as libraries was agreed as a priority.

The Lyon Declaration (2014)⁶

Over 500 organisations and institutions from across the library, development and technology sectors have signed the Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development which asserts that “increasing access to information and knowledge across society, assisted by the availability of information and communications technologies (ICTs), supports sustainable development and improves people’s lives.” The Lyon Declaration calls for “Improved ICT infrastructure [to] be used to expand communications, speed up the delivery of services and provide access to crucial information particularly in remote communities.” It states that “Libraries and other information intermediaries can use ICTs to bridge the gap between national policy and local implementation to ensure that the benefits of development reach all communities.”

UNESCO CONNECTing the Dots: Options for Future Action: outcome Document (2015)⁷

The outcome document from UNESCO’s February conference—to be submitted to UNESCO’s Executive Board in April 2015—places a focus on access. It affirms that increasing access to information and knowledge across society, assisted by the availability of information and communication technologies (ICTs), supports sustainable development and improves people’s lives." Furthermore, paragraph 2.4 calls for the promotion of “universal access to information and knowledge and ICTs by encouraging the creation of public access facilities, and by supporting users of all types to develop their capabilities to use the Internet as creators and users of information and knowledge."

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Geneva Plan of Action (ITU, 2003): www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_multi.asp?lang=en&id=1160%7C0

⁶ Lyon Declaration: www.lyondeclaration.org

⁷ UNESCO, Connecting the Dots (UNESCO, 2015):

www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/outcome_document.pdf