UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Broadening Access to Knowledge

Broadening Access to Knowledge, from book to hypertext

Knowledge is easier to obtain than ever, yet many people still do not have access to basic information. This is why making knowledge accessible to all is one of UNESCO's priorities.

From the invention of the printing press to the age of the Internet, the means of accessing knowledge are continuously increasing. This is crucial to UNESCO, an Organization responsible for "promoting the free flow of ideas by word and image". The variety of means of dissemination has resulted in broadening access to knowledge but too many people are still denied access to basic information - not to mention new information and communications technologies (ICTs) - because of their geographical location or social condition. The monthly cost of an Internet connection, for example, represents 1.2% of an average U.S. salary while it accounts for 191% in Bangladesh and 278% in Nepal.

INFORMATION FOR ALL
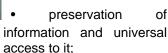
To build knowledge societies, the Organization emphasises the human dimension: freedom of expression, universal access to information, access to quality education as well as cultural and linguistic diversity of content. An essential element of this strategy resides in promoting access to information through a number of concrete actions. For example, UNESCO offers opportunities for training in information and communications technologies, especially for women and young people. It also develops and distributes free software. UNESCO supports the creation of Community Multimedia Centres (CMCs) and of telecentres in remote areas of developing nations. CMCs provide new technologies to disadvantaged communities. Working with a group of partners, UNESCO has developed a complete kit of training modules (Multimedia Training Kit) designed for CMC staff. The training modules are distributed on CD-ROM and are also available online (see: To Find Out More).

The Information For All Programme (IFAP) is a key element in achieving the goals determined by UNESCO's mandate: contribute to "education for all," to "the free flow of ideas" and to "increase the means of communication between peoples". UNESCO's Information for All Programme provides a platform for international policy discussions and guidelines for action on:

Learning to read in the Philippines
(D. Roger © UNESCO)

• preservation of information and universal access to it;
• participation of all in the emerging global information society;
• ethical, legal and societal consequences of ICT developments.

The aim is to build equitable information societies and to reduce the digital divide. To achieve its objectives, UNESCO, among other activities, participates in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and in implementing its Action Plan. The Organization calls attention to the ethical, legal, social and cultural aspects of the Information Society and encourages all involved (decision-

Cutting red tape with just a click

UNESCO and India's National Informatics Centre (NIC), in mid 2005, launched a kit to help political and administrative officials to implement electronic administration programmes. The kit comes as a CD-ROM and aims to demystify the concept of "electronic administration". Along with a general description of the concept, the kit provides several chapters on required equipment, advice on reinforcing human capacities, on developing infrastructure and establishing partnerships. It also addresses the question of creating a legal framework. It presents a number of case studies of several successful initiatives and describes the stumbling blocks encountered and how to overcome them. The kit is one example of UNESCO's contribution to the implementation of the Action Plan adopted during the first phase of the World Summit on Information Society held in Geneva, Switzerland in December 2004. The Plan calls on governments to implement electronic administration strategies aimed to improve the efficiency of the administration and to reinforce relations with citizens.

makers, professionals and representatives of civil society) to also consider these issues.

In the Culture Sector, UNESCO is particularly attentive to national policies regarding publishing. Appropriate policies allow the publishing industry to develop at all levels: authors, printers, distributors and booksellers. This requires governments to consider that publishing is an important, economically strategic cultural sector and that literary creation should be encouraged through measures such as cutting production and distribution costs and adopting an appropriate legal framework. UNESCO provides legal and technical expertise to Member States requesting such aid. It supports the extension of international publishing networks. It also supports awareness programmes such as World Book and Copyright Day (23 April), the World Book Capital, book donation campaigns (such as those created within the *Libros para todos* programme designed for Latin American and Caribbean countries). It contributes to the recognition of quality children's books as well as to the donation of books and the creation of mobile libraries aimed at encouraging reading. Favouring translation is also a major UNESCO endeavour. Translations allow each person to access information in their native language and to improve their comprehension of other cultures. The *Index Translatonium* is produced by the Organization as a tool to measure output and international exchanges in translations. The *Index* is the only international translation bibliography existing in the world.

Accessible, free, online and updated three times per year, the *Index Translatonium* contains 1 600 000 entries online (from 1979 to the present). Its database concerns all fields including literature, social and human sciences, natural and exact sciences, art and history.

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To Find Out More

Multimedia Training Kit:
http://www.itrainonline.org

On WSIS, Tunis , 16-18 November 2005 :
http://www.itu.int/wsis

On IFAP :
http://www.unesco.org/webworld/ifap