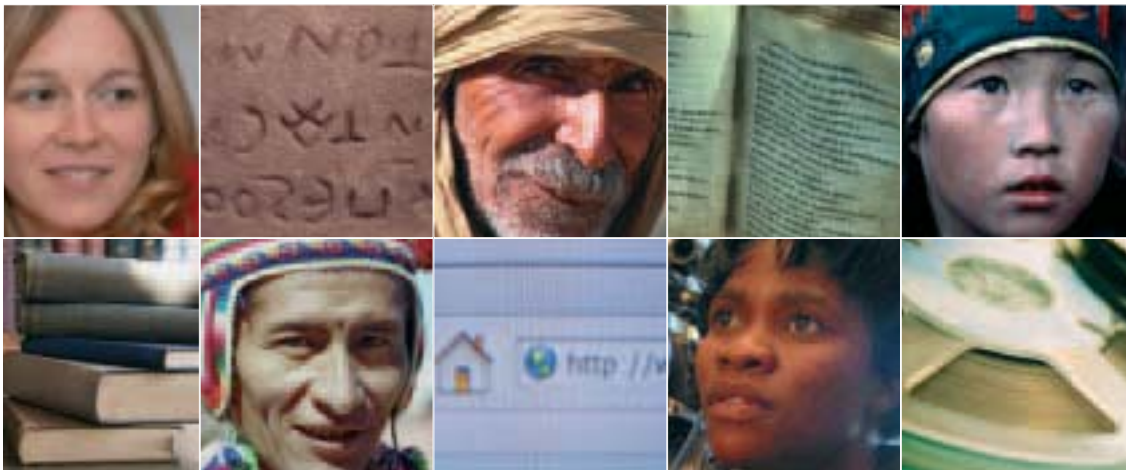UNESCO

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Communication and
Information Sector

Information
for All
Programme

IFAP

Living
Information

Living Information

brings together two important concepts – access to information and the use of information. Information that is "living" suggests that people have access to information and can use it, including information that previously might have been inaccessible in libraries, archives and museums. Living Information also refers to information that helps people enhance their "lives", for example through education and improved health.

The vision of the *Information for All Programme* (IFAP) is of a world where everyone has access to information that is relevant to them and where everyone has the opportunity and skills to use this information in creating better societies.

UNESCO refers to these new societies as *Knowledge Societies*. Four key principles are the basis of this concept: freedom of expression; universal access to information; respect for cultural diversity; and equal access to quality education.

While recognizing the importance of all four principles, IFAP focuses on universal access to information and knowledge. For the first time in history the technological means to achieve this goal exist. With traditional media such as radio and new media such as the Internet, there is no technological reason why all people on this planet cannot have access to information that is relevant to their individual lives. Rather, the challenges are more about politics, economics and education.

Access to information resources contributes directly to economic growth. The ability to find and apply the right information can help tackle some of the world's most critical issues – poverty, health, quality edu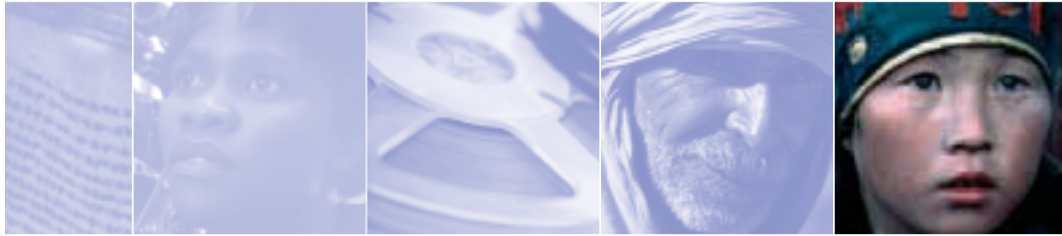cation, disaster prevention, governance and care of the environment. HIV/AIDS is now recognised as a problem deriving primarily from a lack of information. Teachers and students require access to quality learning resources. Early warning systems can help reduce the loss of life from natural disasters. Publicly accessible information on political decisions is essential for good governance. Information about the effects of pollutants can help societies create more sustainable futures.

The *Information for All Programme* seeks to address these crucial issues by narrowing the gap between the information rich and the information poor.

The *Information for All Programme* is an intergovernmental programme, created in 2000. Through IFAP, Governments of the world have pledged to harness the new opportunities of the information age to create equitable societies through better access to information.

What is IFAP?

The last decade has witnessed technological development at a scale and speed unprecedented in the history of humankind. The challenge the world faces is to ensure equitable access for all people to seize these new opportunities. Information is central to development. Information is essential for survival and sustainability. Information is the pathway to understanding and peace. The *Information for All Programme* is UNESCO's response to the challenges and opportunities of the Information Society.

The *Information for All Programme* is closely integrated with UNESCO's regular programme, especially in the area of communication and information. IFAP works closely with other intergovernmental organizations and international NGOs, particularly those with expertise in informati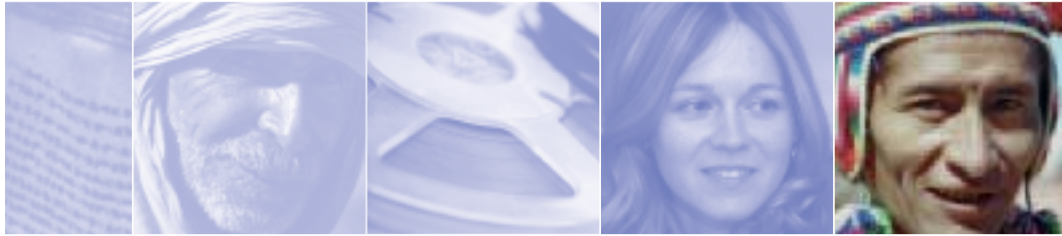on management and preservation, for example the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the International Council on Archives (ICA).

At the beginning of 2006, more than 50 IFAP National Committees exist, providing a focus at the country level as well as an opportunity to interpret and mobilize the IFAP vision for local communities.

A central concern of **UNESCO**
is the disparity between
developed and developing
countries. Countries are often
characterised as "north"
and "south" depending on
their economic situations,
but in recent years, a new divide
between them has emerged -
the digital divide.

IFAP exists to be an advocate
for all people on the wrong side
of the information divide,
whether they be in developed
or developing countries.
Of special concern are the
needs of women, youth and
the elderly, as well as persons
with disabilities.

IFAP's objectives

■ The *Information for All Programme* seeks to:

■ Promote international reflection and debate on the ethical, legal and societal challenges of the Information Society

■ Promote and widen access to information in the public domain through the organization, digitization and preservation of information

■ Support training, continuing education and lifelong learning in the fields of communication, information and informatics

■ Support the production of local content and foster the availability of indigenous knowledge through basic literacy and ICT literacy training

■ Promote the use of international standards and best practices in communication, information and informatics in UNESCO's fields of competence

■ Promote information and knowledge networking at local, national, regional and international levels

IFAP's actions

Within its overall mandate, the Information for All Programme works in three specific priority areas to focus actions and discussions and to allocate project funding:

- Information literacy
- Preservation of information
- Ethical, legal and societal implications of ICTs

Information literacy

■ **IFAP raises awareness of the importance of information literacy for all and supports projects enhancing information literacy skills.**

Information literacy and lifelong learning have been described as the "beacons of the Information Society, illuminating the courses to development, prosperity and freedom. Information literacy empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion in all nations."[1]

Information literacy enables people to interpret and make informed judgments as users of information sources, as well as to become producers of information in their own right. Information literate people are able to access information about their health, their environment, their education and work, empowering them to make critical decisions about their lives, for example in taking more responsibility for their own health and education.

In a digital world, information literacy requires users to have the skills to use ICTs and their applications to access and create information. For example, the ability to navigate in cyberspace and negotiate hypertext multimedia documents requires both the technical skills to use the Internet as well as the literacy skills to interpret the information.

[1] Alexandria Proclamation "*Beacons of the Information Society*", High Level Colloquium on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning, Bibliotheca Alexandria, Egypt, November 2005

Preservation of information

IFAP plays a key role in promoting awareness of the importance of preserving information.

Universal access to information is an essential element of a Knowledge Society. But, physical access alone is not sufficient – information must also be "accessible". Throughout history, libraries and archives have been the guardians of the documentary heritage of humankind. Although in past centuries the materials used for writing underwent very few changes, the last two centuries have seen the recurrent emergence of new media, ranging from photography to digital formats.

Access to and the dissemination of information relies, however, on the stability of documents and the retrievability of their content. Paradoxically, technical developments often result in greater instability and shorter lifespan of documents. For example, the clay tablets of Mesopotamia can last further millennia, but audiovisual documents will only survive for decades, and the life of digital objects, on average, will not exceed ten years. In addition, natural disasters and wars frequently destroy entire archival and library collections. The preservation of the world's

legacy of knowledge is a prerequisite for universal access and will greatly impact the extent to which Knowledge Societies develop.

IFAP assists by supporting the development of preservation standards and management tools, and by strengthening the role of libraries and archives and the librarians and archivists who work in these institutions. A special focus is on standards for the preservation of digitally born materials; a *Charter on the Preservation of Digital Heritage* was adopted by UNESCO's Member States in 2003.

Ethical, legal and societal implications of ICTs

■ **IFAP helps increasing global awareness on the ethical, legal and societal aspects of the application of ICTs.**

The international debate on infoethics addresses the ethical, legal and societal aspects of the application of ICTs. IFAP is the only intergovernmental programme with a focus on these aspects. Ethical principles for the Information Society derive from the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and include the right to freedom of expression, universal access to information, particularly which is in the public domain, the right to education and the right to participate in cultural life.

One of the most challenging ethical issues is the inequity of access to ICTs between countries, and between urban and rural communities within countries. In 2003, UNESCO's Member States adopted a framework for addressing this and other challenging ethical issues with the *Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace*. This provides guidance to countries seeking access for their people to the new opportunities arising from the Internet.

Along with the benefits of a digitally connected world come the threats of misuse and abuse. Already countries are building mechanisms to protect their people against these risks, for example to ensure the safety of children on the Internet, but clearly a lot more needs to be done to address the ethical implications of the Information Society. In collaboration with its partner institutions, IFAP seeks to do so.
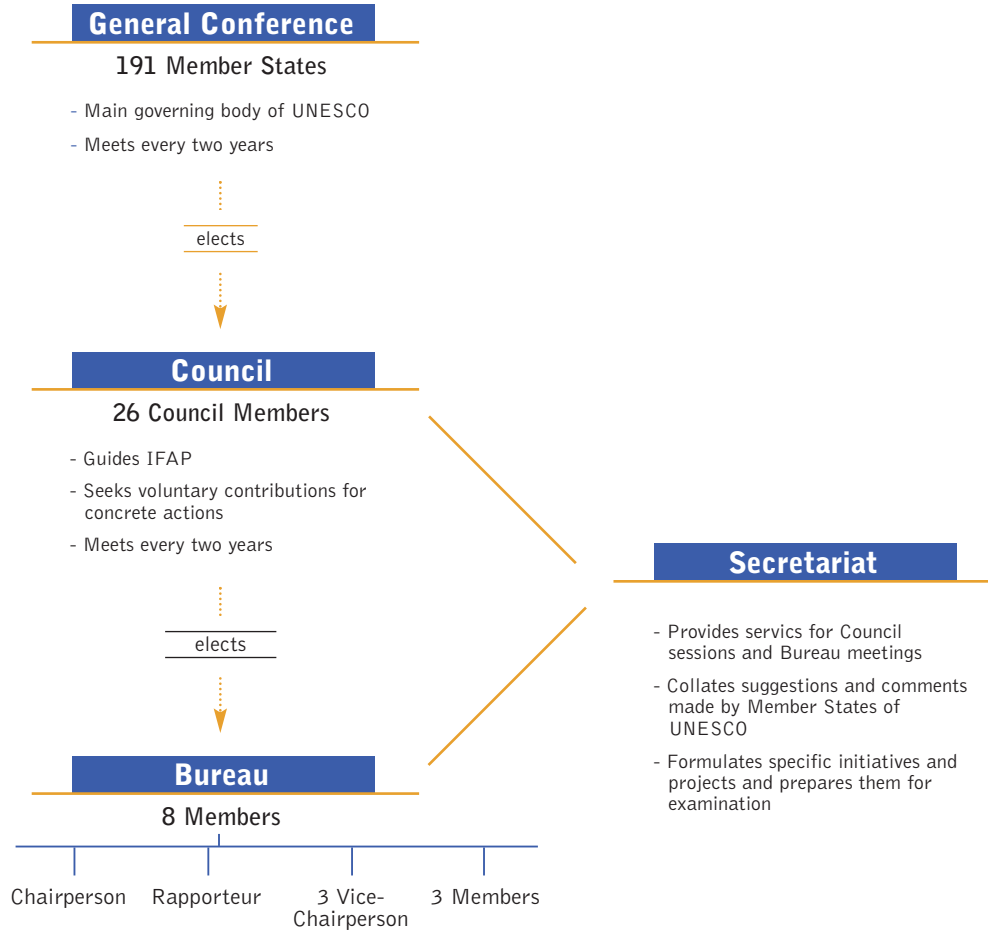
IFAP's unique strength is its intergovernmental character.
The Programme is guided in its planning and implementation by an Intergovernmental Council comprising 26 UNESCO Member States that are elected by UNESCO's General Conference. While the functioning of the Council is financed by UNESCO's regular budget, projects are funded by voluntary contributions made by Member States.

General Conference

191 Member States

- Main governing body of UNESCO
- Meets every two years

elects

Council

26 Council Members

- Guides IFAP
- Seeks voluntary contributions for concrete actions
- Meets every two years

elects

Secretariat

- Provides servics for Council sessions and Bureau meetings
- Collates suggestions and comments made by Member States of UNESCO
- Formulates specific initiatives and projects and prepares them for examination

Bureau

8 Members

Chairperson   Rapporteur   3 Vice-Chairperson   3 Members

Financial contributions to IFAP (2000-2005)
(in US dollars)

Country	Special Account	Funds-in-trust
Brazil	100,202	
China	40,000	
France	218,950	
Greece	8,000	
India	9,967	
Saudi Arabia	20,000	
Spain		808,119
Former International Informatics Programme	748,342	
IFAP funds interest	20,385	
Subtotal	**1,165,846**	**808,119**
Overall total	**1,973,965**	

■ *No Programme can be successful without adequate financial support. IFAP needs complementary funding if it is to achieve the objectives that have been set. Much needs to be done to raise additional extra-budgetary funds.*

Koïchiro Matsuura

While the functioning of the IFAP Council is supported by UNESCO's regular budget, all programme work, including pilot projects, relies on funds from voluntary contributions by donor countries. These contributions are held in the **IFAP Special Account**, which is administered in accordance with the financial regulations of UNESCO, with the Director-General regularly reporting on its functioning.

IFAP also administers a **Funds-in-Trust (FIT)** scheme, whereby donors can nominate specific projects, countries or regions they wish to support.

A key focus for the work of the Council is to secure ongoing funding for its programmes and projects. Up until the end of 2005, the Council has been able to fund some 37 pilot projects. These play a critically important role in raising awareness within countries of the benefits of Knowledge Societies. The Council encourages Governments to expand their financial support so that IFAP can continue to support this extremely important activity.

IFAP

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