



Information  
for All  
Programme

## IFAP Working Group on Information Literacy

### *Proposal 5 for the Preparation of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2012-13 (36 C/5)*

## Promoting Information Literacy Worldwide

### Background

Society at large requires information skills to make decisions in regard to health, education, economic and community life, no matter how little or highly educated citizens might be. Skills to locate, access, evaluate, and use information are vital for individuals' lifelong education, whether at school or in daily activities in the remote rural community or in the urban setting; skills to save and preserve information are equally important. All those are the means to attain personal, social, occupational and educational goals. Information skills are, in addition, basic human rights in the digital world, because they enable the social involvement of citizens of nations. Every citizen must be able to use information critically, whether it is from their neighbours, elders, or if it comes from mass media, or any other printed or digital source from libraries that are at the heart of communities. With the rise of the Internet and the arrival of digital convergence there is an acknowledged need to develop information literacy alongside media literacy.

UNESCO has played a historically pivotal role of promoting education and libraries, but it only recently began working, through IFAP, to tackle the global challenges of information literacy. A number of activities have been undertaken, including the drafting of the Declaration of Principles of the World Summit on the Information Society, and the Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning "*Beacons of the Information Society*", as well as the publishing of the monograph *Towards Information Literacy Indicators*<sup>1</sup> and the financing of the UNESCO-IFLA information literacy logo contest, where the best entry was selected to enhance communication and understanding at an international level. Other important resources supported by UNESCO include the *International Information Literacy Resources Directory* ([www.infolitglobal.iinfo](http://www.infolitglobal.iinfo)), and IFLA's *Guidelines on Information Literacy for Lifelong Learning* ([www.ifla.org/VII/s42/pub/IL-Guidelines2006.pdf](http://www.ifla.org/VII/s42/pub/IL-Guidelines2006.pdf)), UNESCO workshops *Train The Trainer in information Literacy*.

### The Issue

There is an urgent need to raise information literacy awareness among governments, educational institutions, libraries, and in the workplaces of businesses and organizations, so that the proper strategies to foster information skills and competencies are developed for all citizens. UNESCO needs to support the development of information literacy for all countries

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<sup>1</sup> *Towards Information Literacy Indicators* prepared by Ralph Catts and Jesus Lau, edited by the Information Society Division, Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO: Paris, 2008.

as part of its educational mission – doing so will encourage lifelong learning and the growth of a capable society that can nurture its own socio-economic and cultural development.

It is critically important to propose a strategic document on information literacy that could empower people being used as a benchmarking tool for their activities at national and local levels. The Alexandria Proclamation mentioned above is not an official document produced by UNESCO and therefore lacks the legitimacy and authority currently needed in the face of the rapid changes in the field of information.

Officially adopting recommendations on information literacy would allow UNESCO to ask for reports from member states, thus providing further opportunities for the preparation of a “*World Report on Information Literacy*”, identification of best practices in the field and promotion of effective policies and strategies worldwide. It presupposes implications in at least five important directions:

1. Development of comprehensive information literacy programs at all education levels
2. Teacher and librarian training
3. Awareness raising of governmental and civil society institutions
4. Research and its dissemination networks
5. International cooperation in actions, with the use of indicators and observatories.

Information literacy needs to be fully integrated within the framework of national policies for education. More than ever citizens need to have a critical analysis of information whatever the symbolic system used (image, sound, text). The roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the information community should also be part of the equation. In order to do so, countries need indicators to be used as diagnostic tools within the context of their national information society policies. Such actions are coherent with the international commitments to spread literacy, which come under the framework of the agenda of the international community regarding the Millennium Development Goals and the World Summit on Information Society.

### **Recommendations:**

The IFAP Information Literacy Working Group, therefore, recommends to the Director General that UNESCO continues to promote its information literacy work and carry out the following actions:

- To draw up international Recommendations on information literacy to raise awareness among countries and their corresponding institutions, ensuring that it is prepared with the largest possible consultation.
- To elaborate a long-term strategy to implement and adapt concepts and programs of information literacy produced, developed and promoted by IFAP, and IFLA, and other interested parties, and their harmonious adoption by educational establishments, libraries and related organizations.
- To move toward the development of a core curriculum within the National Information Society Policy framework.
- To create with the UNESCO Institute of Statistics a set of indicators that could be used by governments to assess information skills of their population, so that they can implement the most relevant information literacy strategies.

- To convene an international conference to discuss the pooling of government and public efforts in the elaboration of national information policies, including legislative initiatives promoting information literacy; the organization of productive partnership in teaching information literacy to the many interested parties (governmental agencies, universities, schools, libraries, private companies, etc.); and the guaranteed funding of libraries and educational establishments that implement information literacy curricula for the various social and professional groups and diverse categories of students and library users.

All measures should be established in close intersectoral cooperation between Communication/Information and all other sectors of UNESCO as well as UNESCO centres related to the promotion of Information Literacy, such as CERLALC, and in partnership with IFLA that has expressed interest in such work. Other like-minded NGOs could be also called upon, like IAMCR, as well as interested parties at grassroots level (libraries, schools, media community centres, etc.).