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**Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme**

**Second Meeting of the Bureau**

UNESCO House, Paris, Room XIV (Bonvin Building), 2 – 3 September 2002

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

**IFLA INTERNET MANIFESTO**

**Summary**

The Programme for Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA/FAIFE) has prepared an "Internet Manifesto" (Annex 1) that proclaims the fundamental rights of users both to access and to publish information on the Internet without restriction.

Decision required: paragraph 10

1. The Programme for Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA/FAIFE) has prepared an "Internet Manifesto" (Annex 1) that proclaims the fundamental rights of users both to access and to publish information on the Internet without restriction.
2. The text asserts that intellectual freedom is at the core of library services and that freedom of access to information, regardless of medium and frontiers, is a central responsibility of the library and information profession.
3. The text also stresses the importance of unhindered access to the Internet by libraries and information services that should support communities and individuals to attain freedom, prosperity and development. It states that barriers to the flow of information should be removed, especially those that promote inequality, poverty, and despair.
4. IFLA intends to develop international guidelines for implementing the principles contained in the Manifesto. The guidelines shall assist and support librarians developing policies and priorities for Internet services in accordance with the needs of their communities.
5. UNESCO has long been involved in the promotion of universal access to library resources. In this context, UNESCO and IFLA have launched in the past two declarations of principles, which guide the creation and operations of public libraries and school libraries worldwide.
6. The Public Library Manifesto, adopted in 1994, proclaims UNESCO's belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women.
7. The School Library Manifesto, adopted in 1999, aims to define and advance the role of school libraries and resource centres in enabling students to acquire the learning tools and learning content that allow them to fully develop their capacities; to continue to learn throughout their lives; and to make informed decisions.
8. The IFLA Internet Manifesto seeks to complete this set of Manifestos, as the development of information technologies, more particularly the Internet, has created a completely new environment modifying substantially the actions of acquiring and disseminating information and knowledge.
9. The Bureau of the Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme may wish to adopt the following decision:

The Bureau of the Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme,

1. Having examined document IFAP-2002/Bureau.II/7, particularly the "IFLA Library Manifesto" contained in this document;

2. Welcomes the spirit and the objectives of the "IFLA Internet Manifesto";
3. Decides to include an item entitled "IFLA Internet Manifesto" on the Agenda of the Council at its 2<sup>nd</sup> session;
4. Requests the Secretariat to prepare a document submitting the Internet Manifesto to the Council at its 2<sup>nd</sup> session for endorsement.

## **The IFLA Internet Manifesto**

*Unhindered access to information is essential to freedom, equality, global understanding and peace. Therefore, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) asserts that:*

- *Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual both to hold and express opinions and to seek and receive information; it is the basis of democracy; and it is at the core of library service.*
- *Freedom of access to information, regardless of medium and frontiers, is a central responsibility of the library and information profession.*
- *The provision of unhindered access to the Internet by libraries and information services supports communities and individuals to attain freedom, prosperity and development.*
- *Barriers to the flow of information should be removed, especially those that promote inequality, poverty, and despair.*

### **Freedom of Access to Information, the Internet and Libraries and Information Services**

Libraries and information services are vibrant institutions that connect people with global information resources and the ideas and creative works they seek. Libraries and information services make available the richness of human expression and cultural diversity in all media.

The global Internet enables individuals and communities throughout the world, whether in the smallest and most remote villages or the largest cities, to have equality of access to information for personal development, education, stimulation, cultural enrichment, economic activity and informed participation in democracy. All can present their interests, knowledge and culture for the world to visit.

Libraries and information services provide essential gateways to the Internet. For some they offer convenience, guidance, and assistance, while for others they are the only available access points. They provide a mechanism to overcome the barriers created by differences in resources, technology, and training.

### **Principles of Freedom of Access to Information via the Internet**

Access to the Internet and all of its resources should be consistent with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and especially Article 19: *Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*

The global interconnectedness of the Internet provides a medium through which this right may be enjoyed by all. Consequently, access should neither be subject to any form of ideological, political or religious censorship, nor to economic barriers.

Libraries and information services also have a responsibility to serve all of the members of their communities, regardless of age, race, nationality, religion, culture, political affiliation, physical or other disabilities, gender or sexual orientation, or any other status.

Libraries and information services should support the right of users to seek information of their choice.

Libraries and information services should respect the privacy of their users and recognize that the resources they use should remain confidential.

Libraries and information services have a responsibility to facilitate and promote public access to quality information and communication. Users should be assisted with the necessary skills and a suitable environment in which to use their chosen information sources and services freely and confidently.

In addition to the many valuable resources available on the Internet, some are incorrect, misleading and may be offensive. Librarians should provide the information and resources for library users to learn to use the Internet and electronic information efficiently and effectively. They should proactively promote and facilitate responsible access to quality networked information for all their users, including children and young people.

In common with other core services, access to the Internet in libraries and information services should be without charge.

### **Implementing the Manifesto**

IFLA encourages the international community to support the development of Internet accessibility worldwide, and especially in developing countries, to thus obtain the global benefits of information for all offered by the Internet.

IFLA encourages national governments to develop a national information infrastructure which will deliver Internet access to all the nation's population.

IFLA encourages all governments to support the unhindered flow of Internet accessible information via libraries and information services and to oppose any attempts to censor or inhibit access.

IFLA urges the library community and decision makers at national and local levels to develop strategies, policies, and plans that implement the principles expressed in this Manifesto.