

WSIS+20
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Libraries and WSIS+20
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Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. As a Professor and Librarian at the University of Illinois, I commend the WSIS+20 process and thank you for the opportunity to speak here today on behalf of IFLA, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

IFLA brings together and represents libraries, whose longstanding mission is well stated in the contemporary mission of Google: *to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful*. But, more importantly, libraries go further in recognition of the fact that a people-centered information society requires a skills and capacity development agenda for individuals and communities.

IFLA's ability to deliver on the WSIS vision is based on a network of millions of public and community institutions, present in cities, towns, and villages around the world. They are at the heart of every local digital compact. This network represents a vital source of diverse content and cultural heritage, as well as providing essential support for open access, science, education, and more.

For many people, particularly the most disenfranchised, libraries offer the only way to get online. For others, we are a vital complement, providing connection speed, device access, and support to build capacity, skills, and confidence that is not otherwise available. And, from a social perspective, we are a key part of a healthy information infrastructure, characterized by integrity, trust, inclusivity, safety, and sustainability.

Libraries are a global digital public infrastructure, and the content we collect, preserve, and share represents a significant digital public good.

IFLA has been proud to engage with the WSIS process for over 20 years, as well as to deliver on its action lines. The WSIS approach matches the mission and values of libraries closely, with a focus on turning knowledge into real-world change, for all.

IFLA – and the world's libraries – underlie our ongoing commitment to the WSIS vision. We can bring much to the future process. We offer a pre-existing network, dedicated staff, non-commercial public spaces, expertise in information, and a clear focus on realizing human potential. The current UNESCO IFAP briefing on libraries and digital inclusion underscores this.

Yet we cannot realise our full potential alone. We seek to have libraries integrated into digital inclusion strategies by all relevant stakeholders.

I end, then, with a question – how can you, in your future work to implement the WSIS agenda, partner with IFLA and better mobilize your libraries?

Thank you.

For more information about IFLA's activities and partnership opportunities:

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