



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS  
FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS DE BIBLIOTHECAIRES ET DES BIBLIOTHEQUES  
INTERNATIONALE VEREINIGUNG BIBLIOTHEKARISCHER VERBÄNDE UND EINRICHTUNGEN  
FEDERACION INTERNACIONAL DE ASOCIACIONES DE BIBLIOTECARIOS Y BIBLIOTECAS  
МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ ФЕДЕРАЦИЯ БИБЛИОТЕЧНЫХ АССОЦИАЦИЙ И УЧРЕЖДЕНИЙ  
国际图书馆协会与机构联合会  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات ومؤسسات المكتبات

3 June 2018

**RE: Opening Words at the UNESCO-IFAP conference on Tangible and Intangible Impact of Information and Communication in the Digital Age,**

Ladies and Gentlemen, we would like to thank you for your welcome to Khanty Mansiysk, and in particular to thank Mr Evgeni Kuzmin for his engagement, his energy and his expertise. UNESCO and the library world would be poorer without him.

We also wanted to thank you for the theme of this conference, which crosses a number of core areas of the work of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions - IFLA.

You may have seen the recent study by the Pew Centre, which showed that a big majority of Americans continue to see the Internet has having brought benefits to them in their personal lives.

However, the share of respondents feeling that it had had a wholly positive impact on society fell, while those seeing it as having brought a mixture of good and bad grew. This raises an important challenge. While we are increasingly connected as individuals, what can we do to ensure that we can form connected towns, cities and societies, deal with the challenges we face, and realise the potential of the Internet as a driver of inclusive, sustainable development?

This is where, for IFLA, libraries come in. They bring the power of information access to a welcoming physical space, with dedicated staff and support.

As a study earlier this decade has underlined, libraries have a crucial role in promoting ‘social’ Internet access – access in groups, allowing individuals to cooperate and construct meanings and solutions based on information found.

They are public-focused, often with a mission to reach out to the marginalised.

And they are long-time experts in finding, evaluating and applying information.

They offer a positive answer to many of the concerns we face today about the volume and veracity of information, by helping individuals to take more critical attitudes and realise where to take care.

Banning content, or focusing only on the dangers, risks creating ignorance and distrust. Supporting libraries and skills development at the community level should be at the heart of a proactive agenda.

We are proud to say that IFLA itself is working to build a united library field, better able to support these community transformations. In the first round of our efforts to define a global vision, it was clear that libraries’ work on promoting literacies, and the need for partnerships, are high on the list of interests.

We trust that at this conference, you will be able to work together to form alliances, change mindsets, and build a more confident, and informed future



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Thank you, and we wish you rich discussions in the coming days,

Gerald Leitner  
Secretary-General, International Federation of  
Library Associations and Institutions

Glòria Pérez-Salmerón  
President, International Federation of  
Library Associations and Institutions