



Joint Statement by IFLA and the IPA on the First International Day for Universal Access to Information, on 28 September 2016

Access to information is more than just a principle; it is the reason why libraries and publishers exist.

While today is the first International Day for Universal Access to Information, in reality, libraries and publishers have been working towards this goal for centuries. Its inaugural edition offers a chance to celebrate both those whose work gives citizens access to information, and the benefits that their work brings.

The importance of access to information cannot be overstated. Shortly after UNESCO's decision to create this International Day, last November, the United Nations Member States endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They agreed that universal access to information is not only an important goal in itself, but that it is also a driver of success in other areas. Librarians and publishers also agree, and we will continue to support governments and international institutions in their efforts to achieve the SDGs.

Access to information should be universal. Yet some groups face particular challenges in accessing information, notably people who are refugees, disabled, living in poverty, or who speak minority languages. We will work together to find ways to ensure that people's personal circumstances do not create barriers to access.

To achieve universal access to information, we need a sustainable environment for libraries and publishers. While we welcome the flourishing of free expression online, giving more people access to a wider range of information than ever before, we must work to maximise not only the quantity, but also the quality of information on offer. We must support freedom of access to information, and reject censorship.

Publishers play an indispensable role on the supply-side, identifying, investing in and promoting talent. Well-supported libraries allow families, students and researchers to enjoy the fruits of this talent, to find their way through the wealth of information available, and sow the seeds for future creativity and innovation. They should be supported and protected from short-sighted cutbacks. To guarantee access to information, both libraries and publishers need adequate resources and a legal environment that reflects the digital age. In particular, we should develop and implement sustainable business models which facilitate libraries acquiring and sharing eBooks.

In order to realise the benefits of universal access to information, literacy is essential. Libraries and publishers perform decisive roles in developing the ability to read in the first place, and in promoting the media and information skills people need to truly benefit from what they read, hear, or see. We strongly welcome and support the UN Secretary-General's call for universal literacy by 2030.

28 September 2016 is the first International Day for Universal Access to Information. IFLA and the IPA, and the libraries and publishers whose interests we represent, look forward to seeing progress in all of the areas set out in this statement in time for the second.