Development *and* Access to Information

2017
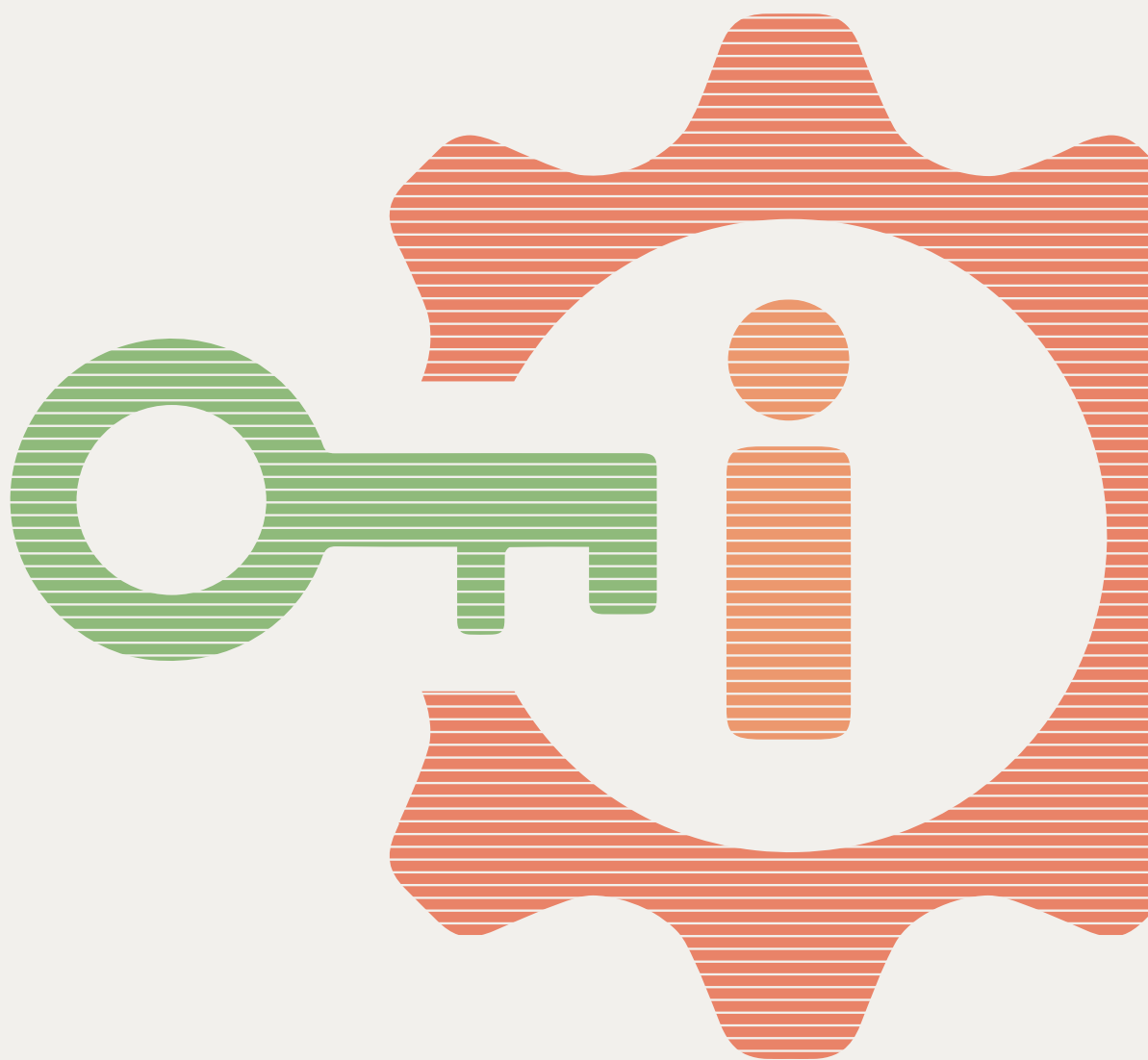
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The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users. It is the global voice of the library and information profession.

The Technology & Social Change Group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington Information School explores the design, use, and effects of information and communication technologies in communities facing social and economic challenges. With experience in over 50 countries, TASCHA brings together a multidisciplinary network of researchers, practitioners, and policy experts to advance knowledge, create public resources, and improve policy and program design.

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Foreword

Around the world, every day, libraries are giving people access to the information they need to live, learn, create, and innovate. From the grandest institutions in the world's greatest cities, to the mobile libraries plying rural back roads, they know that this access empowers individuals, communities, nations and organisations to make better decisions, and live better lives.

This is the argument that we, and many other colleagues, brought to the United Nations as Member States debated the Post-2015 Agenda. The implication, for us, was clear. The Sustainable Development Goals, as they became known, had to include access to information. We are grateful to them for their efforts.

We are glad to say that the UN's Member States shared this understanding, and included access as a specific goal, as well as important targets around Internet access, safeguarding heritage, and universal literacy.

The priority now is implementation.

Maintaining the momentum towards greater and more meaningful access to information will require time and resources. Governments, businesses, civil society, the technical community and researchers all have a responsibility to act.

We are proud that IFLA is taking its role here seriously. It has signed agreements with representatives from over 70 countries to promote the SDGs, and ensure that National Development Plans include access to information and draw on the contribution that libraries can make.

In order to help other relevant actors to design and implement the right laws and programmes, as well as to understand their impact, baselines, indicators, and examples of good practice are necessary. In short, good policies for access to information require good information.

This report does just this, fulfilling a commitment made in the 2014 Lyon Declaration on Access to Information. The result of a close partnership with the Technology & Social Change Group at the University of Washington Information School, it underlines the contribution that access to information, and libraries as key providers of this, make to development.

While the ability of our institutions to improve the lives of our communities is what motivates us and IFLA's members to do our jobs, the research presented here offers an exhilarating insight into quite how broad, and how significant, this contribution is. Importantly, it makes this message clear and accessible for all. There can be no excuse for leaving out access to information when designing policy for sustainable development.

IFLA and its members stand ready to work with governments, international organisations, and funders to make this happen.

Donna Scheeder, *President, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions*

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