

Development *and* Access to Information

2017



Librarians have long understood that by giving access to information, they improve the lives of their communities. Access allows people to learn, take part in society, make better choices, and innovate. It pays off in every aspect of people's lives – finding jobs, building networks, staying healthy, and coming up with ways to improve their situation.

The Member States of the United Nations recognised this when they included access as a target under SDG 16. Together, the 17 SDGs offer a comprehensive programme for a better world, with no-one left behind. Factors such as access to information are 'cross-cutting' – they promote progress across the board.

More Than Connectivity

For IFLA, access is more than just an Internet connection and device. To make a difference, leaving no-one behind, it needs to be meaningful. Users must be able to find locally relevant content, in a local language. They should have the skills and confidence necessary to find, apply, and create information. And they must have laws and social norms that protect fundamental freedoms and everyone's right to participate.

Libraries are crucial to achieving this, from acting as public Internet access points to delivering skills (including on coding, for example). They are trusted spaces, experienced in working with community needs. And they are staffed by trained professionals, dedicated to public service.

Access cannot be taken for granted. Too many people still lack Internet access and computers or smartphones. Skills levels – not least basic literacy – are inadequate in many cases, and many are daunted by what goes on online. Restrictive laws and practices remain. And not all libraries have the funding and laws needed to realise their potential. Investment – of time and resources – is necessary. The pay-off will be major progress towards Sustainable Development.

DA2I – Providing the Evidence Base

The [Development and Access to Information \(DA2I\)](#), launched in 2017 by IFLA in partnership with the Technology & Social Change Group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington Information School, report offers the evidence to back up this message.

Delivering on a commitment in the [Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development](#), it sets out how meaningful access to information drives development.

Its content is organized in the following sections:

1. A framework for measuring meaningful access to information around the world, in terms of physical connectivity, social norms, skills, and protection of free expression and access to information. In this context, it sets out baseline indicators.
2. A look at the unique role that libraries can play in delivering access, reaching out to all members of their communities.
3. Chapters focusing on how access contributes to achieving key areas of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The report is intended as a tool. IFLA will use it at the UN and in other international settings to promote recognition of the importance of access to information and libraries. It is important to ensure that the statements, recommendations, declarations and guidance issued by such institutions echo the arguments of library associations nationally.

But more importantly, it should serve IFLA's members. Freely available online, and with a variety of supporting materials planned, it is an affirmation of the role of libraries, and helps underline the connection between our institutions' work and the SDGs. It should also support the work of IFLA's International Advocacy Programme participants, and others, in advocating for greater recognition of the role of libraries within institutions, and government.

We therefore invite and encourage you to read the report and other materials, and think about how you could use it. You could:

- Share the DA2I in your newsletter and social media!
- Use it as a basis for discussion within your association – what does development and access to information mean for you, your members, and library users in your country
- Look at your country statistics on the measures of access to information
- Translate the Executive Summary into your language (contact us to get the template to facilitate translation!)
- Present copies or send the link when you are meeting with relevant ministers or senior officials
- Download and learn more about the DA2I: [DA2I.ifla.org](https://www.ifla.org/publications/2017/01/da2i)
- Ask us any questions! Contact IFLA at: DA2I@ifla.org

