

IFLA Statement to the UNPGA Event on North-North, South-South and Triangular Co-operation, and ICT for Development, May 21-22, 2014

Thank you Mr. Chair for giving the floor to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions – or IFLA – the global voice of libraries and their users.

I was lucky enough to make a statement this morning on the digital divide so this afternoon will concentrate on knowledge sharing. Yesterday we heard from the President of the General Assembly that cross-border collaboration is a positive result of access to ICTs. We also heard many delegates mention how important it is to share information across borders, and how key knowledge sharing will be in the post-2015 environment. IFLA could not agree more.

All of us here are excited by the possibilities of the digital. But I have to tell you something worrying: the international copyright framework that libraries need to share information is not fit for the digital age. We need exceptions from copyright to open up information resources for our users, and to help those in the developing world have access to the same information opportunities as those in the developed.

The shift from print to digital has seen publishers lock up information behind paywalls and extremely restrictive licenses, and copyright exceptions and limitations that enabled libraries and archives to share print materials across border in pre-digital times, no longer work for most countries in the 21st century. Even in many developed countries, where good exceptions exist they are often overridden by private contract.

The result of all this? The world we are talking about here, with information shared across borders for the benefit of development, will not come about. You might be able to access information you want, but only if you can afford it. Copyright is not fit for purpose in the world of the data revolution. For our data revolution to work, we need an international copyright framework that enables libraries to support this sort of collaboration.

IFLA is working at the World Intellectual Property Organisation for an international legal framework for libraries and archives that will enable information sharing across borders, leading to greater opportunities for access to research and culture, particularly in developing countries. I would encourage you to visit www.ifla.org to find out more. In this context, IFLA is encouraged to hear Anita Gurumurthy, Silvia Ribeiro and some distinguished delegates call for a rethinking of legal frameworks that govern the Internet. We must include copyright in the development equation. If we are serious about harnessing the power of the data revolution then we have to be serious about supporting it, and that means we will have to update copyright to focus it on benefitting users, not rent-seekers.

Thank you Mr. Chair.