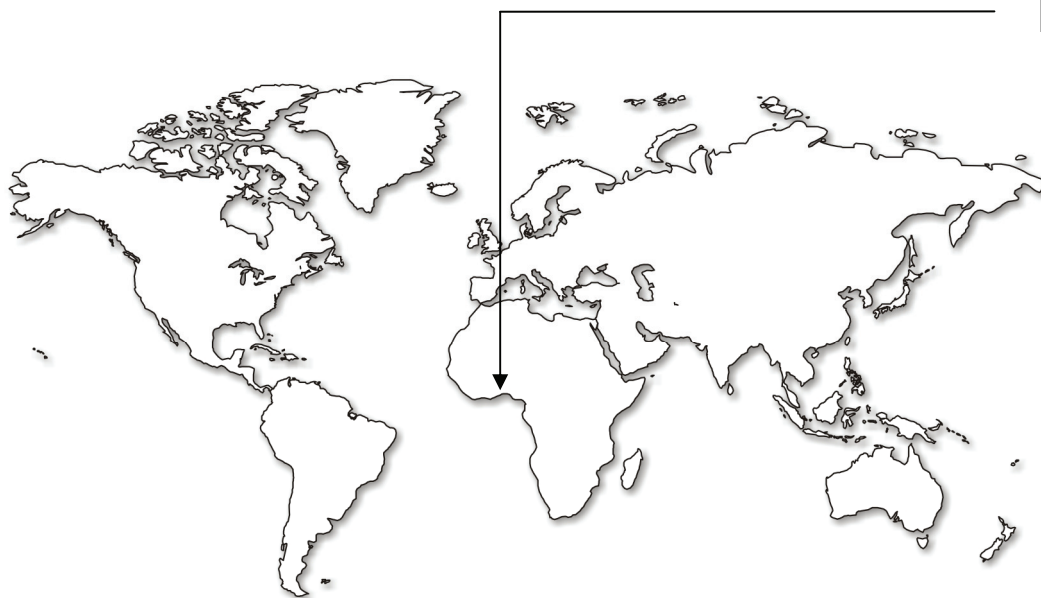


Benin

Responding institution:
National Library of Benin

This is Benin's third consecutive contribution to the World Report. Although the figure of 70 public libraries is an improvement on the 2005 report, the respondent has indicated that this number – as given in the Benin Index of Documentary Institutions (1994) – is misleading because many libraries have closed. The same applies to the other types of libraries, but they are nonetheless given in this response as 15 university research libraries and 45 school libraries. No figure is provided for government-funded research libraries.

Internet access is less than 20% in all of Benin's libraries and is paid for by users. Existing library budgets are for maintaining basic services, and libraries cannot afford Internet access. Very little local content is available on the Internet. Benin's literacy rate is given as 32.9%.

The question of filtering information has not come up for discussion in the library association due to the low rate of Internet access. In general, however, some librarians are in favour of filtering and in some libraries with Internet access, certain sites have been blocked.

No anti-terror laws have been passed in the past two years. The respondent is of the view that such legislation would impact on user privacy, and that the keeping of records should not affect the individual's freedom of expression, provided these records are not used against the library user. According to the report, there have been no incidents of the violation of

intellectual freedom. Some incidents have, however, been reported in third-party sources.

Benin's national library has collaborated with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in HIV/Aids awareness programmes for young library users and other social sectors. It has also been involved in a programme to assist women with information on motherhood, child-rearing and access to education for them and their children. All these activities fall under the Centre of Documentation on Mother and Child.

The Internet Manifesto has not been adopted, and it is the intention of the association to do so within the next two years. The association is aware of the Glasgow Declaration, but has not yet scrutinised it carefully enough to consider adoption. This should, however, happen within the next two years. The respondent is not aware of a Benin library association code of ethics, but hopes to inform members so that this will inspire them to formulate such a code for library professionals.

User privacy and anti-terror legislation

No anti-terror laws have been passed in the past two years. The respondent believes that such legislation would impact on user privacy, and maintains that keeping records should not affect the individual's freedom of expression, provided these records are not used against the library user.

Reported incidents/violations of intellectual freedom in the past two years

According to the respondent, there have been no

incidents of violation of intellectual freedom in the past two years. Reporters Without Borders and IFEX, however, have recently highlighted violations in the form of the arrest of journalists and the refusal to allow journalists to cover a press conference. The managing editor of the newspaper *Panorama* was arrested for publishing information that could “destabilise” the country. These events are cause for concern, especially for a country that for many years has been seen as a model of modern democracy in West Africa.

Sources:

<http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/60884/>

<http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/73148/>

<http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/73121/>

HIV/Aids awareness

The national library has collaborated with NGOs in HIV/Aids awareness programmes. These have been aimed at young library users and other social sectors.

Women and freedom of access to information

The national library is involved in a programme that

assists women with information on motherhood, child-rearing and access to education for them and their children. The Centre of Documentation on Mother and Child is responsible for coordinating these activities.

IFLA Internet Manifesto

As in 2005, the Internet Manifesto has still not been adopted, and it is the intention of the association to do so within the next two years.

IFLA Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and intellectual Freedom

The library association is aware of the Glasgow Declaration, but has not yet scrutinised it carefully enough to consider adopting it. This should, in the view of the respondent, happen within the next two years.

Ethics

Although the respondent is not aware of a code of ethics for the Benin library association, it hopes to inform members so as to inspire them to formulate such a code for library professionals.

Main indicators

Country name:	Benin
Population:	8 078 314 (July 2007 est.)
Main language:	French (official), Fon and Yoruba (most common vernaculars in the south), tribal languages (at least six major ones in the north)
Literacy:	34.7%
Literacy reported by respondent:	32.9%

Population figures, language and literacy are from the
CIA World Factbook, 2007 edition
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.



Libraries and Internet access

Benin contributed to the World Report series in 2005 and 2003. The following section compares data and answers from 2007 with the 2005 IFLA/FAIFE World Report and adds context from the respondent's estimates, where possible.

Library services

Estimated number of public libraries*:	70 (2005: 51)
Estimated number of school libraries:	45
Estimated number of university libraries:	15
Estimated number of government-funded research libraries:	No data provided
Source of these numbers:	Index of Documentary Institutions of Benin (1994). According to the respondent the numbers are not correct – the numbers indicated in the index have decreased, because many libraries have since closed.

Internet access

Population online**:	425 000 Internet users as of Sept. 2006 (5.5%) (2005: 0.8%)
Percentage of public libraries offering Internet access to users:	Less than 20% (2005: Less than 20%)
Percentage of school libraries offering Internet access to users:	Less than 20%
Percentage of university libraries offering Internet access to users:	Less than 20%
Percentage of government-funded research libraries offering Internet access to users:	Less than 20%
In your estimate, how much local content*** is available on the Internet:	Very little
To what degree is content on the Internet available in local languages:	Nothing, or practically nothing
Is the library association in favour of filtering information on library Internet terminals:	No (2005: No)
Is the use of filtering software widespread in your country's libraries:	No (2005: No)
Is it free of charge for library users to access the Internet on library computers:	No (2005: No)
Has the state or other library authorities made any extra funding available for Internet access in the library system of your country in the last two years:	No (2005: No)

* Public library service points, including branch libraries.

** Online population numbers are from Internet World Stats (www.Internetworldstats.com).

*** Local content is defined as content that originates in the country.