

Israel



Responding institution:

Ministry of Culture Science and Sport: Directorate Libraries Department

Israel is responding to the World Report for the third time, having previously contributed in 2001 and 2005. This response refers to the activities in 1 100 public library service points (the 2005 report referred to an estimated 1 176 public library service points) and 2 200 research libraries, including 140 government-funded research libraries, 60 university libraries and 2 000 school libraries. (The 2005 response referred to 250 research libraries; there may have been different interpretations of what constituted research libraries in 2005 and 2007.)

In July 2006, the online penetration for Israel was estimated at 51.1%. Internet access in public and school libraries is estimated at 41-60%; for university and government-funded research libraries it is 81-100%. The respondent has indicated that there is average coverage of both local content and local languages on the Internet. According to the respondent, as well as the 2007 *CIA World Factbook*, the literacy rate is estimated at 97.1%.

Access to the Internet is free of charge for all library types. According to the respondent, the free Internet access in libraries around the country matches the democratic living standards in the Israeli society. Although students pay for their academic studies in Israel, they also receive access to these services from their homes. The state or other library authorities have

made extra funding available for Internet access as part of the library departmental policy. (This has been the case since 2003, when Internet facilities were installed in over 400 public libraries. Librarians have also received Internet training.)

The library association in Israel is not in favour of filtering information on library Internet terminals and filtering software is not widely used in the country's libraries. According to the respondent, libraries believe in the information freedom of the citizen, and work in accordance with the principles of a code of ethics, which was written a decade ago. Some libraries, however, such as high school libraries, may be blocking websites due to moral beliefs. (The 2005 report explains that there is information filtering in Israeli libraries to protect children, religious values and public morality, despite the library community being against the filtering of information.)

Regarding special areas of focus, the respondent has indicated that libraries in Israel are still not troubled by anti-terror legislation. Concern about intellectual freedom is, however, mentioned by the respondent as well as some third-party resources. The respondent recommends that books and other material by Ora Nebenzahl, Raphael Cohen-Almagor and the Technology and Law page at the University of Haifa (<http://techlaw.haifa.ac.il/>) be consulted for more information on intellectual freedom in Israel.

Libraries have not been involved in any programmes to raise awareness of HIV/Aids, or in programmes to provide HIV/Aids information to members of the

community who are unable to read. There are also no special programmes to promote women's information literacy or women's access to information.

A code of ethics was adopted in 1996 (see <http://www.ifla.org/faife/ethics/iclcode.htm>). Neither the IFLA Internet Manifesto nor the Glasgow Declaration has been adopted.

User privacy and anti-terror legislation

No anti-terror legislation has been passed in Israel and the respondent does not feel that such legislation, if passed, would impact on user privacy. The keeping of library user records will also not harm individual Internet library users' freedom of expression. According to the respondent, freedom of expression has its limits even in a democratic society and has little to do with keeping users' records, which are confidential and are part of the necessities of current library work.

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

According to the respondent, there has been concern about intellectual freedom. Such incidents are, however, very few and usually not related to the security situation in the country. There were cases of attempts to censor books because of their sensitive content. For instance, an attempt was made in one of the academic libraries to ban a book instructing students how to become Internet hackers. The students objected and the attempt was abandoned. Another case concerned an Internet site on a book describing sensitive material about a sunken Israeli submarine called "Dakar". This attempt succeeded at first, but due to public pressure the book was released for sale at a later date.

Third-party sources noted some concerns about human rights, such as the status of Arab-Israeli women (<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/08/10/leban013955.htm>), and citizen deaths due to ongoing violence (<http://web.amnesty.org/report/2006/isr-summary-eng>). There is even more concern about restrictions on journalists to enter restricted zones, such as the Gaza strip or southern Lebanon, as well as the danger to them in areas of conflict (<http://www.ifex.org/fr/content/view/full/76234>; <http://www.ifex.org/fr/content/view/full/75330>).

Concerns about an outdated broadcasting law (<http://www.ifex.org/fr/content/view/full/81159>) and the detainment of a Palestinian journalist have also been noted (http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=15804). According to the 2007 annual report of Reporters Without Borders, Israel's journalists enjoy a

quality of freedom not found elsewhere in the region. Although 2006 was one of the safest years for them since the start of the second Intifada in 2000, many problems remain (http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=20764).

On a positive note, Israel recently announced the establishment of a national committee for the Information for All Programme, headed by Niv Ahituv of Tel Aviv University. Created in 2000, the programme provides a platform for international policy discussions and guidelines for action on the preservation of information and universal access to it; participation of all in the emerging global information society; and ethical, legal and societal consequences of developments in information and communication technologies. The programme's intergovernmental council is composed of representatives of 26 member states, who guide the planning and implementation (http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=20605&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

HIV/Aids awareness

Libraries in Israel have not been involved in any programmes promoting HIV/Aids awareness or in programmes for providing HIV/Aids information to members of the community who cannot read. This might be because such campaigns are mostly initiated by the health authorities.

Women and freedom of access to information

Libraries have not been involved in initiatives designed to promote women's literacy or women's access to information. As the literacy rate is high, there is no pressing need for such programmes. The respondent does, however, feel that it might be a good idea to promote the issue with minority groups in Israel. Public libraries in Israel are generally not very involved in the social and political life of the country; they rather focus on cultural activities.

IFLA Internet Manifesto

As the Israeli Association of Libraries and Information Centres (ASMI) has been very busy with other matters, it has not yet considered international matters such as the adoption of the IFLA Internet Manifesto. They do, however, intend to do so within the next two years. (According to the 2005 response, the Manifesto has been adopted.)

IFLA Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom

The respondent is not aware of the IFLA Glasgow Declaration having been adopted, but is of the opinion

that the country's library community would adopt it within the next two years. This is similar to the 2005 response.

Ethics

The Israeli library community adopted a code of ethics in 1996. Several surveys among the public and

academic libraries showed that although the code had been adopted, most librarians are not aware of it. Resources on the code of ethics are mostly in Hebrew. The code is available at <http://www.ifla.org/faife/ethics/iclcode.htm>.

Main indicators

Country name:	Israel
Population:	6 426 679 (July 2007 est.)
Main language:	Hebrew (official), Arabic (used officially for the Arab minority), English (the most commonly used foreign language)
Literacy:	97.1%
Literacy reported by respondent:	97.1%

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

Israel contributed to the World Report series in 2005 and 2001. 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*:	1 100 (2005: 1 176)
Estimated number of school libraries:	2 000
Estimated number of university libraries:	60
Estimated number of government-funded research libraries:	140
Source of these numbers:	Annual Survey; Inspector School Libraries for SEMEL ASMI (Israeli Association of Libraries and Information Centres)

Internet access

Population online**:	3 700 000 users as of July 2006 (51.1%) (2005: 45.2%)
Percentage of public libraries offering Internet access to users:	41-60% (2005: 41-60%)
Percentage of school libraries offering Internet access to users:	41-60%
Percentage of university libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100%
Percentage of government-funded research libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100%
In your estimate, how much local content*** is available on the Internet:	Average
To what degree is content on the Internet available in local languages:	Average
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. It is possible that some libraries (high school libraries especially) decide to block websites on moral and religious grounds (2005: Yes, to a certain degree; this is motivated by the need to protect children from harmful material, to safeguard religious values and to safeguard public morality)
Is it free of charge for library users to access the Internet on library computers:	Yes, in all libraries (2005: Yes, in all libraries)
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:	Yes – it is part of the library departmental policy (2005: Yes)

* 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.