# Kuwait

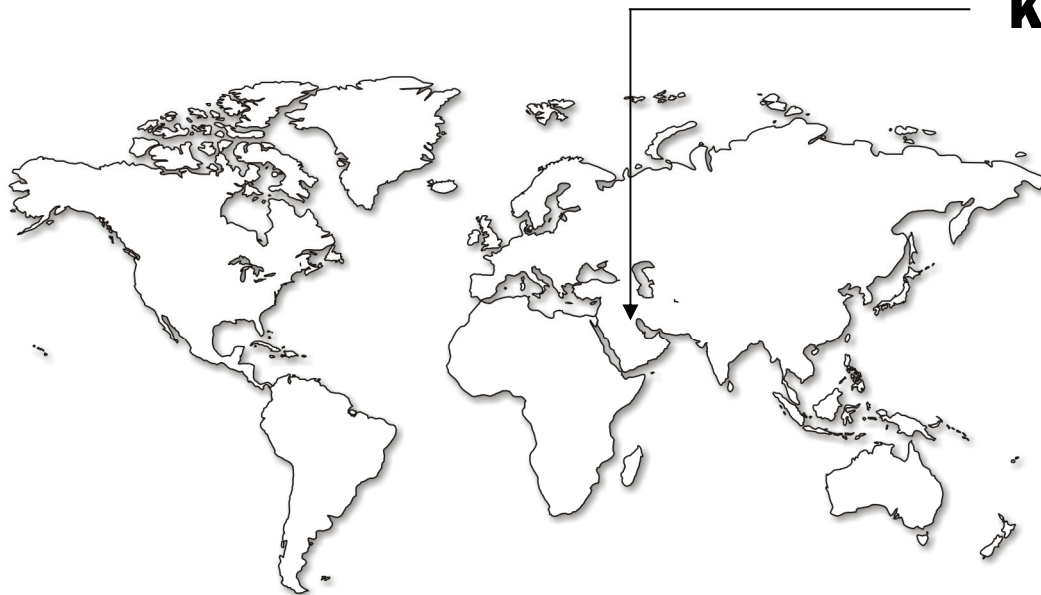**Responding institution:**
*National Library of Kuwait*

Kuwait is responding to the World Report for the third time, having previously contributed in 2001 and 2003, with a lapse in 2005. This response refers to the activities in 15 public libraries and 87 research libraries (including 2 government-funded research libraries, 5 university libraries and 80 school libraries).

In September 2006, the online penetration for Kuwait was estimated at 25.6%. There has therefore been a steady improvement on the 0.16% penetration estimated in 2001 and the 9.47% in 2003. Although Internet access in public libraries is estimated at 61-80% (41-60% in 2003), access is very healthy in all other library types (81-100%).

Although Internet coverage of the local languages is average, local content is very well represented. According to the 2007 *CIA World Factbook,* the literacy rate is estimated at 93.3%.

Contrary to the 2003 report, it has been indicated that access to the Internet is not free of charge. The state or other library authorities have not made extra funding available for Internet access in the library system over the last two years.

In contrast to 2003, the library community in Kuwait is now reported to be in favour of filtering information on the Internet. Filtering software is widely used in the country's libraries, whereas in 2003 the use of such software was widespread only to a certain extent.

Reasons for filtering include the protection of children, national security, and the safeguarding of religious values, the national ethos/culture and public morality.

Based on the report alone the situation regarding intellectual freedom in the country seems to be good, although concerns about the violation of intellectual freedom have been noted by third-party sources. No adverse effects of anti-terror legislation have been reported.

The respondent has indicated that libraries in Kuwait are still not troubled by anti-terror legislation. No incidents of the violation of intellectual freedom have been reported by the respondent, and no information sources that might further explain the status of freedom of access to information in the country have been offered.

Libraries have not been involved in any programmes to raise awareness of HIV/Aids, or to provide such information to members of the community unable to read. Although there are no special programmes to promote women's information literacy, libraries are involved in initiatives to promote women's access to information on topics such as social information, the economy, education, health and family planning.

Due to a contradicting response it is not clear whether Kuwait's librarians have adopted a special code of ethics, or whether they intend to do so in two years' time. Neither the IFLA Internet Manifesto nor the Glasgow Declaration has been adopted. (Questions on these three issues were not completed in the 2003 response.)

**User privacy and anti-terror legislation**

No anti-terror legislation has been passed in Kuwait. The respondent has indicated that if such legislation were to be passed, it would impact on user privacy, but that the keeping of user records would not affect the freedom of expression of the individual library Internet user. The respondent does not elaborate on this. (In 2003 it was indicated that libraries in Kuwait did not keep user records. It was felt that it would harm the individual Internet library user's freedom of expression.)

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

According to the respondent there have been no reported violations of intellectual freedom. Both positive aspects as well as concerns are, however, noted by third-party sources. According to the 2006 World Report of Amnesty International (http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/kwt-summary-eng), women gained the right to vote and to stand for political office. Evidence of the exercising of these rights is noted in its 2007 World Report (http://thereport.amnesty.org/eng/Regions/Middle-East-and-North-Africa/Kuwait).

A few reports cover trials on terrorism-related charges. In March, a new press law gave power to the courts to license and suspend publications. It failed to repeal provisions that allowed for the imprisonment of journalists. Although the legislation has been designed to protect journalists' basic rights, they still appear to avoid criticising the authorities for fear of reprisals. Actions against journalists have also been noted (http://thereport.amnesty.org/eng/Regions/Middle-

East-and-North-Africa/Kuwait; http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=20767).

**HIV/Aids awareness**

Libraries in Kuwait have not been involved in any programmes for promoting HIV/Aids awareness or for providing HIV/Aids information to members of the community who cannot read. No reasons have been offered.

**Women and freedom of access to information**

Libraries in Kuwait have not been involved in initiatives designed to promote women's literacy. It has been indicated that they are involved in special programmes to promote women's access to social information and information on the economy, education, health and family planning, but no detail has been provided.

**IFLA Internet Manifesto**

Although the IFLA Internet Manifesto has not been adopted, the library community intends to do so within the next two years.

**IFLA Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom**

The IFLA Glasgow Declaration has not been adopted. There is no indication of whether or not the library community intends to adopt it.

**Ethics**

Although the respondent indicates (without offering further detail) that Kuwait's librarians have adopted a special code of ethics, it has also been indicated that they intend to adopt such a code in two years' time.

## Main indicators

| | |
|---|---|
| Country name: | Kuwait |
| Population: | 2 505 559 (July 2007 est.) |
| Main language: | Arabic (official), English (widely spoken) |
| Literacy: | 93.3% |
| Literacy reported by respondent: | No data provided |

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

**Kuwait**

## Libraries and Internet access

Kuwait contributed to the World Report series in 2003 and 2001. The following section compares data and answers from 2007 with the 2003 IFLA/FAIFE World Report and adds context from the respondent's estimates, where possible.

**Library services**

| | |
|---|---|
| Estimated number of public libraries*: | 15 |
| Estimated number of school libraries: | 80 |
| Estimated number of university libraries: | 5 |
| Estimated number of government-funded research libraries: | 2 |
| Source of these numbers: | Respondent's approximation |

**Internet access**

| | |
|---|---|
| Population online**: | 700 000 users as of Sept. 2006 (25.6%) (2003: 9.47%) |
| Percentage of public libraries offering Internet access to users: | 61-80% (2003: 41-60%) |
| Percentage of school libraries offering Internet access to users: | 81-100% |
| 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: | Very much |
| *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: | Yes (2003: No) |
| Is the use of filtering software widespread in your country's libraries: | Yes – for the protection of children; for national security; and to safeguard religious values, the national ethos/culture and public morality (2003: Yes, to a certain degree, motivated by the desire to protect children from harmful content) |
| Is it free of charge for library users to access the Internet on library computers: | No (2003: Yes) |
| 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 |

\* 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.