



2020 IFLA General Assembly Report of the President

Dear Colleagues, dear friends

I am honoured to deliver this President's report to the General Assembly.

In Australia we acknowledge the owners of the land on which we meet.

Today I am presenting this report from the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people and I pay my respects to their elders, past and present.

I also acknowledge all indigenous colleagues who have joined us today.

The major IFLA project undertaken this year has been the Governance Review.

The new Governing Board began work at its first meeting in August in Athens on the third stage of the IFLA Roadmap.

This was a governance review to ensure that IFLA has the best possible structure to achieve its strategic aims.

We wanted to develop a new structure that will enable a more inclusive, transparent and effective IFLA.

Later in this meeting I will present a report on the governance review and the new structure; the result of the work done by all of us to achieve this ambition.

The last months of 2019 and early 2020 will be remembered as the time before the world changed; when our libraries were open and we were able to meet in person, attend conferences and workshops and move freely around.

Back when travel was still possible, I attended a number of important gatherings focussed on outcomes of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, that also emphasised my presidential theme – Let's work together.

These included conferences of significant IFLA partners. The International Council on Archives met in Adelaide.

United Cities and Local Government – UCLG – is the global voice of local and regional governments which supports cities and regions to achieve the goals of the UN2030 Agenda.

I attended their conference in Durban South Africa and reached preliminary agreement on a memorandum of understanding between our two organisations.



Another strategic IFLA partner is UNESCO, and I gave a keynote at a conference in Doha organised by the UNESCO and Qatar National Library to discuss the state of documentary heritage preservation and conservation in the Arab world.

I also spoke at the International Conference on Digital Landscape in New Delhi which emphasised the transformation to digital and the urgency of working towards a sustainable world and reducing inequality and the digital divide.

Sadly, all the physical conferences and events arranged and so keenly anticipated were cancelled from March.

However, since April I have been to more places than I ever thought possible – even to Fiji and Singapore on the same day!

The opportunities of reaching out to more members and the global library field have greatly expanded thanks to the rapid adaptation to working and meeting virtually.

I have participated in global, regional and local conferences, workshops, summits, forums, graduations and other events in many countries. It has been an enriching and engaging experience to be part of so many gatherings.

In this unprecedented year, I think that there are some common themes emerging.

Our global library field is very good at working together and sharing information; the pandemic is highlighting and also hastening the changing role of libraries; we are innovative and creative in our responses; there is a new appreciation of libraries – we are seen as partners in delivery of services and important community resources; and there are significant concerns about funding into the future.

Most of all we are resilient and we can pivot with the best of them!

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Governing Board, I am full of admiration for their good-natured acceptance of the challenges of meeting and working virtually across so many time zones.

Despite all, we have together achieved a great deal this year and we have also had to make significant and hard decisions.

Thank you, President elect Barbara Lison, Treasurer Tonia Arahova, Professional Committee chair Vicki McDonald and the Executive Committee; and all GB members.

Thank you to our Secretary General Gerald Leitner who has worked tirelessly to ensure that the best outcomes possible have been achieved for IFLA in very difficult and complex situations.

The IFLA staff continue to do great work and have shown how adaptable they are.

And to all of you - everyone who has contributed so generously to keeping IFLA the global voice of libraries through your work on the professional units and in so many capacities. Thank you all.

Let's keep working together in these strange times to make libraries as good as they can be!

Christine Mackenzie
IFLA President 2019-2021