

## IFLA President Glòria Pérez-Salmerón's Closing Speech

HOLA!

Dear Colleagues, my time as president comes to the end today, 29 of August of 2019. And this afternoon it's my turn to say thanks. Thanks to all who have been ready to join the conversation, to build the conversation, to drive the conversation.

Because at its heart, IFLA is a global conversation about how to improve libraries and the lives of their users by meeting their access to information needs.

I have many thoughts to tell you in my farewell speech. But this is my statement to summarise my message as IFLA President.

IFLA is with you, with all of you sitting in this hall, and with all librarians all over the world. The global community of Librarians. I know that being IFLA President is a great privilege. I'm sure that our fellow past presidents sitting in the first row will agree!

Yes, it's an honour and a privilege. The privilege to be able to meet with so many members of the global library field. To be able to see your work. To talk with you about the present, and the future of libraries. About what's important to you. About what you need. Deep down, we know what it is to be a librarian. What are the values that we share.

Equality, freedom, justice, peace, and progress. The values that dialogue, that democracy is built on. I can confirm this. All the conversations I've had, the examples I've seen, there is so much evidence. But beyond shared values, I want to argue that there is also a shared sense of mission. A desire not just to defend what we have achieved, but to go further, to do more. Because we are not just a global community, but a global movement.

My motto as IFLA President is 'Libraries: Motors of Change'.

With this, I wanted to share my belief – my conviction – that libraries can be an equaliser, an enabler, a catalyst. A force for a better world. My experience has shown that I am far from alone in my belief. That there is no lack of dedication. No lack of inspiration. No lack of action to turn this conviction into reality.

Motors of Change. I can say it, but you are doing it! Millions of librarians, driving progress. The foundations of the movement are in place!

But we cannot stop here. We need to keep going. Maintain the momentum. Build the movement.



To do so, it cannot only be the world around us that we look to change. We need to look to our own mindsets. How we think about what we are doing now. How we explore new opportunities. How we work together, my dear President-Elect.

We are not businesses, but we need to be entrepreneurial, to be looking, always, for opportunities to do more, to do better. We must welcome the new, while making sure to protect what's important from the past and present. We need to be aware of what makes us special, but never forget that we are part of – that we serve – our communities, our societies. To draw on global expertise and inspiration to deliver local impact. To improve both the way we do our own jobs, and our ability to build partnerships with others.

In the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, we have the perfect framework for doing this. A global call, by all Member States of the United Nations, across all areas of government action. From poverty to global partnerships, through agriculture, education, employment, innovation and good governance. Targets, indicators, monitoring. An excellent way both to organise our own thinking, our own action, and to show it. All with the approval, with the commitment of governments.

Crucially, the SDGs also underline the need for new ways of thinking, of doing.

And it is not only governments that need to become more effective to make development happen, but everyone. We, librarians, must do so also. It is the message of the Global Vision, and a message I have emphasised as IFLA President.

Because so many of the challenges we face. From those with planetary dimensions – climate change, epidemics, pollution. To those which may seem local, but which are repeated from one community to the next, around the world. These challenges require a response – a positive, effective, engaged response – from libraries.

So we all need to see the connections between issues. To refocus efforts. To commit to leaving no-one behind. We need to take the commitment to access to information that brought so many of us into the profession, and share it, convince those in power of it. It's not easy. We all have our specialities, our type of library, our priorities, our habits. Languages, time-zones, current structures and practices can stand in the way. But it is necessary. And with confidence and optimism, we can make it.

I have already said. I feel so privileged to have had the opportunity to lead IFLA, together with the members of the Governing Board and the IFLA Secretary General, in this special moment. IFLA's transformation. A real transformation, focused on the future, that needs a strong leader in command.

Thank you, Gerald you are making this transformation possible, we all thank you! I have so many great memories of this journey. I have been so happy to have been a "leader of the movement", encouraging librarians to step up their efforts to advocate to decision-makers, to ensure that they know how – by providing meaningful access to information to all – libraries are motors of social change.

It has been an easy role for me to play, because I'm absolutely convinced that we can change the lives of millions of people. To work to discuss how organised and empowered libraries can make a difference. How we can not just adapt to, but stay ahead of trends. How we can build strong national library fields, with strong relationships with decision-makers and governments. How we can

take our place at the heart of policies and strategies to achieve the SDGs. How we can define – and realise – the IFLA Global Vision.

I have had the honour to hold two President's Meetings – in Barcelona, and in Buenos Aires – where I have been able to dig deeper into these ideas. To share the perspectives of experts around the world, on libraries, on their role, now and in the future. To exchange with great audiences, to come up with great ideas. To accelerate our work to build a global library field, able to deliver on the Global Vision.

In my speeches, when I've been talking about IFLA's transformation, I've described IFLA as being like an old lady, full of wisdom, strong in her convictions, but needing support to walk alone. This image has helped me to explain to our colleagues the change IFLA needs to make in itself. To take our wisdom, our values, and to realise our potential, to walk unaided, and indeed, to help the library field as a whole to walk strong, to walk tall.

Our new Strategy, which I hope has inspired, engaged, enabled and connected you all, is our way of making this happen. I can say, IFLA is more alive than ever. Better able to unite the library field, to help it to face the challenges of globalisation and turn them into opportunities to serve our users. Better able not just to meet user needs, but to advocate actively for access to information as an essential requirement for personal and societal development. Better able to define the actions – clear, innovative, effective actions that we can carry out ourselves, and with our partners – in order to achieve our vision. Better able to show – definitively, that libraries are an investment, not a cost.

The library field is amazing – you are amazing – I can only hope that I have given you the service that you deserve. It has been an intense time, but it has been also the most incredible, wonderful and inspiring time of my professional career. I have learnt so much and I'm still learning from you, my dear colleagues. In my talks with librarians and associations, decision-makers and partners I have seen how much IFLA can do for them, how the IFLA Global Vision is just a starting point to creating a Global Movement.

Once again, I want to thank my employer Diputació de Barcelona, for its full support during my time at IFLA, and for giving me the time to carry out my work. As anyone who has heard me speak about Barcelona knows – I am a keen ambassador of my hometown! Thank you too to FESABID, the Spanish Federation of Associations of Archivists, Librarians, Information Specialists and Museologists, of which I was also President – twice! You provided a great training for my time at IFLA.

Thanks to my great family that has become larger by 3 more members these last 3 years, and my mum for her help and infinite patience. Thanks to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Global Libraries Program Director, Deborah Jacobs, Past-President Donna Scheeder, and IFLA Secretary General Gerald Leitner, my fellow travellers on the road to IFLA's future. I have learnt so much from you three.

Thank you to my colleagues on the Governing Board – I am glad that many of you will serve a second term, supporting Christine as she takes on the Presidency. You have been a great support to me. My best wishes to you all – both those who are staying, and those who are leaving. And finally, I thank all of you, my lovely IFLA staff, for your expertise and commitment to our Federation.

I would like to finish my speech, with the wise words of Pompeu Fabra, a prominent Catalan engineer who lived very close to my home in Badalona, where he worked intensely on the Catalan

Language and Grammar. When he finished his incredible work, he said: “Cal no abandonar mai ni la tasca ni l’esperança” Which in English means: “We must abandon neither our labours nor our hopes” So, let’s follow his advice and ‘Work Together’ to continue our important task to deliver the best for our future.

We have turned the ignition, started the motors of social change.

Now we must create a global movement in order to bring meaningful access to information for all.

I wish Christine, my successor, all the best in this task.

HASTA LUEGO - See you later!

Thank you.