

If You Want To Go Fast: Walk Alone, If You Want To Go Far: Walk Together

Ingrid Bon

IFLA

ingrid.bon@ifla.org

Abstract

The Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals offer big opportunities to libraries and more specific to public libraries. Whether they are aware or not, public libraries are supporting development goals in every country around the world.

This presentation will touch up on the timeline from start, year 2000 Millennium Goals till year 2030 when the Agenda 2030 should be realized. It will show how IFLA was speaking at the UN meeting but also the steps that have been taken into getting libraries on the agenda, showing that libraries are agents and motors to change.

This valuable asset to society knows an infrastructure worldwide, a connected library field, to work for a better world. Worldwide libraries contribute to help people get connected to the internet and access the information they need. Informed people are citizens that can make better decisions and deliver support to an inclusive society.

For many people, librarians included, the relationship between Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals are not very clear. Not even to mention how libraries can get involved and even are involved already but without knowing this, unaware so to say. There are many challenges regarding the Goals that are facing us and whether or not the world and for our profession, the Global Library field is ambitious enough to find solutions to those challenges.

It is big stuff, not in a land far, far away, but in reality and on a prominent level, but that is what IFLA does. IFLA works on communication with and on the impact of libraries at an international level. Influencing actors to use libraries at national and local levels in support of their policy objectives. And this refers immediately to the title of my presentation:

If you want to go fast: walk alone

If you want to go far: walk together

When Agenda 2030 (then known as Post 2015) came up, the Governing Board of IFLA was informed about the opportunities for the library field.

During the discussions about our profession, which, by the way, is all about working with people and not with books, and focused on helping the community to become informed citizens who are capable to make decisions in their own lives.

What was going on at the UN showed it was the right time for libraries to get involved its post 2015 ambitions. Former IFLA President Donna Scheeder has been very active in New York. And IFLA, through its President, had the opportunity to speak up for libraries, including to influential people.

The eight millennium goals were the starting point. It was ambitious and never done before. Education was here already but nothing on information in any other high-level sense. When the MDG's were negotiated, libraries were not at the table. Some libraries were involved in African conferences but on a global level they had not yet any significant impact. Therefore the real story starts in 2012.

As you can tell by the timeline: a lot has been going on since then. The Millennium Goals were considered to be for the developing world, but it became clear that the issues only could be dealt with if the approach was global. Therefore, Agenda 2030 and its goals now have an effect in every country.

The Sustainable Development Goals and its Agenda 2030 gave itself 15 years to eradicate poverty and leave no one behind. Talking about ambition! The world, the UN moved from a concept to a global agenda in over 50 years.

IFLA knew that something big was coming at the beginning of the negotiations. It was a very ambitious plan and the library field could not afford to be NOT part of it.

So IFLA focussed on the role that access to information plays in supporting sustainable development. The approach was: information is a cross-cutting issue. It could contribute to every single Goal the UN wanted to achieve.

IFLA argued that information is a fundamental requirement for development, and that libraries support this. Information promotes better decision-making, helps people learn new skills. Information helps people exercise their human rights and promotes accountability. Advocating for access to information can create policy space for libraries to move into and become development partners.

So IFLA undertook two years of advocacy at the UN. The centrepiece of this work was the Lyon Declaration which involved over 600 organisations from across library, development, media and tech sectors.

Remember what the Lyon Declaration asked for? "We call on Member States of the United Nations to acknowledge that access to information, and the skills to

use it effectively, are required for sustainable development, and ensure that this is recognized in the post-2015 development agenda.”

This was taken to the floor of UN. And, what did the world get? A framework in 4 parts to be applied in all UN members States NOT just the developing and/or emerging countries:

- Declaration: Vision of the world in 2030
- SDG's (17 goals, 169 targets), the things the world needs to achieve by 2030.
- Means of implementation; who is going to pay and how much will it cost.
- Follow-up and review; including indicators. How do we know which countries are on track in meeting the Goals?

It lays the foundations for sustainable development, for future generations; our children. Take a close look at some examples of Goals and Targets. There are so many possibilities for the library, especially for public libraries. And for library associations. See the connection and the interconnectivity? How can a nation want their citizens to live a healthier life if they do not have access to information? And more specifically, to reliable information.

Each country needs to develop a National Development Plan (NDP). IFLA hopes that libraries can sit at the table to help write those plans. The NDPs are being drawn up as we speak. Each country is different and has different indicators to measure the progress taken towards meeting the goals and targets of the plan.

BUT if access to information and libraries are not included in a NDP, the connected, global library field will have missed a great opportunity.

Why are libraries good partners for development? They are trustworthy, maybe boring or old fashioned, but a strong brand. And everywhere!

Places where people like to be. A golden opportunity for governments. Public libraries and all other libraries too, can attach their work to each and every one of the goals and targets.

What does the connected global library field need to do to achieve a Long- term Information Environment? IFLA is already advocating on several important topics: copyright, open access, public library systems, literacy and reading, preservation of cultural heritage, public access to the internet, the right to be forgotten, fighting FAKE news and net neutrality.

And what if the access to information has been organized well? Does this mean everybody can access or has access? Some people are illiterate, have bad or no vision, can read but have trouble understanding the words or lack Internet skills.

On a global level the message still is: first you learn to read and then you read to learn, no matter the device or format.

What does the landscape look like? For many of these issues IFLA has published policies, standards, manifestos and (joint) statements. These are all available to help support professionals around the world.

But let us go back to the Lyon Declaration again, on measurement of impact of access to information. This year, for the first time, the DA2I (Development of Access to Information) report, has been presented in June at the New York Public library. Every two years a follow-up report will be presented. This showcases that indeed libraries are engines of development.

IFLA took up its responsibilities to develop the IAP, International Advocacy Programme. The main objective was to give the library field the tools needed for them to advocate for libraries and the role they play in national development. They deserve a place in the NDPs. In only a few months IFLA designed a plan, trained core trainers and executed six regional workshops with over 72 countries participating. This was an enormous result and delivered in such a short amount of time. It shows the importance and need to act now. The library field cannot sit and wait.

What is the International Advocacy Programme all about? Advocacy is a word and understanding that does not exist in many countries and languages. It means to speak up for a worthy cause and acting like an ambassador. To spread the word and set libraries in the spotlight.

The plan was developed in the summer of 2016. In October 2016 the Train the Trainers seminar was organized. In November 2016 the first workshop took place and in early March 2017 the last one, in Doha, Qatar. The Advocacy cycle was one of the most important parts of the workshops. Theory AND practice. Develop your own plan. Participants learned to do so by a simple but effective model: The Advocacy Cycle.

What did IFLA learn from all six workshops? Librarians are not always used to long term planning. They are not used to preparing and planning step by step how they will get libraries on the agenda and themselves on the table. Data collecting and literacy (how to create a nation of readers) were among the topics covered by all six workshops. IFLA is working with several organizations on literacy and reading and a working group will deliver a toolkit to support libraries and associations in the process of writing national reading strategies.

After the workshops IFLA kept in touch with all participants because they signed an agreement. Our Communications Officer, Violeta Bertolini, asks them about their activities to develop awareness and on advocacy, sharing this among the workshop participants and the trainers. The third update was published in

November 2017 and it showcases much involvement, many activities, meetings and more. IFLA webpages show many examples and supporting materials.

IFLA sent out two calls for Proposals within the International Advocacy Project in January and August 2017 and received 115 proposals to the first call and 75 to the second call. These were numbers never reached before. Communications go via Slack, Flickr, and IFLA pages Lib4Dev, which stands for Libraries for Development. In 2018 we will showcase the results. What are the success stories of the workshop participants and what do they think was A or THE key factor to reach this result?

At the website <https://librarymap.ifla.org/> stories are being shared to inspire others.

The job is not completed, as we know, only in 2030 can we see what happened, both in terms of measuring the results of the 19 Goals and all targets as well as the visibility of libraries. Did the library field get a place at the table? Are libraries key partners in all countries? Can IFLA follow what is happening worldwide on access to information?

Let the library field ask itself:

What is our ambition for the next years?

And what was our ambition, and did we reach it?

IFLA is full of ambition. Besides the International Advocacy Programme and the Library Map of the World (that brings a lot together), IFLA also started the Global Vision Project. We want to be a strong and united library field powering literate, informed and participative societies. To do so we need to know what our connected goals and values are.

In April 2017 we started the discussion with a kick-off workshop, 6 regional workshops and online voting that started at WLIC2017 Wroclaw. All data have been analysed and formed the foundation for key-findings and ten highlights and opportunities. Those will be discussed at six regional workshops with the final report of the Global Vision being presented at WLIC2018 in Kuala Lumpur.

Those outcomes will form the framework for the Strategic Plan 2019–2024 of the IFLA Governing Board to move forward on full speed.

Our future

Our vision

Joint library fields!

Great ambition!

Will you join us?