

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)**

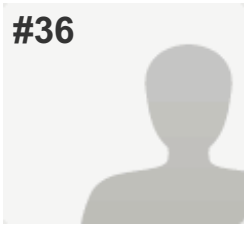
**Contribution to the CSTD ten-year review of the implementation of WSIS  
outcomes**

Submitted by

**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS AND  
INSTITUTIONS**

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**Collector:** Website Collector 1 (Website Survey)

**Started:** Monday, September 15, 2014 6:05:15 AM

**Last Modified:** Monday, September 15, 2014 7:09:21 AM

**Time Spent:** 01:04:06

**IP Address:** 82.217.14.116

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**Q1: Salutation:**

Mr.

**Q2: First Name, Surname:**

Stuart Hamilton

**Q3: Organisation:**

International Federation of Library Associations and  
Institutions (IFLA)

**Q4: Country:**

Netherlands

**Q6: Which stakeholder category do you belong to?**

Civil Society

**Q7: To what extent, in your experience, has the "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society", envisaged in the opening paragraph of the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles, developed in the ten years since WSIS?**

To the extent that the last ten years have seen a rapid expansion in the numbers of people coming online, with increasing numbers of them located in developing countries, then it could be said that, yes, there has been good progress made in respect of a people-centred, inclusive and development-orientated information society.

However, while the numbers might speak for themselves, what is happening within this growth of Internet access is another thing entirely. It is certainly not clear to IFLA that the information society is growing in a way that is 'development-orientated', although we do recognise the potential benefits in a development sense that greater access to ICT offers. Instead, an equally or more significant reason for the growth of the information society would seem to be market-related, with the driving forces of the market contributing to the rollout of infrastructure and new technology. This may not be a bad thing, and will likely have direct and indirect benefits for developing countries, but we should not be blind to the fact that market forces are increasingly driving Internet development, and not the more high-level principles that drive the production of statements like the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles.

We would suggest that progress is being made in terms of inclusivity, particularly when it comes to getting people in remote areas online, or people belonging to vulnerable and marginalised groups. Libraries in particular make strong attempts to provide public access to ICTs in these contexts, and we believe that slow positive movement can be found in terms of who has access to the Internet, whether through fixed or mobile technology. Today, more people have the option to be 'included' in the information society than ten years ago, and this can be seen as a very positive development.

Yet it is unclear if we should call our overall progress 'people-centred' at this time. It is true that access to technology, particularly Internet-enabled mobile handsets, does put individuals in the driving seat when it comes to participation in the information society, but the development of intrusive mass surveillance mechanisms, both corporate and government funded, does take the gloss off of the individual's autonomy somewhat. Free to have access whenever and wherever, but 'free' to be monitored all day, everyday at the same time. If the definition of 'people-centred' takes into account the extent to which personal data is now the currency of the information society then we think it really can be said that we have moved into an age where the person is everything; however, we suspect that the drafters of the Geneva Declaration had something else in mind when crafting the principles.

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**Q8: How far do you consider the implementation of specific WSIS outcomes to have been achieved?**

IFLA will restrict its comments on this question to areas where it has been actively involved. The library community has been a stakeholder of the WSIS process since the preparatory phases of the Geneva 2003 Summit. The WSIS Plan of Action recognizes the key role of libraries in achieving universal access to information and knowledge, with Article 6 (Objectives Actions and Targets of the Agenda) making it a specific objective to “connect public libraries, cultural centres, museums, post offices and archives with ICTs”

IFLA is the moderator of the sub-theme ‘Libraries and Archives’ in the WSIS Action Line C3 ‘Access to Knowledge’ which states in C3 10 (d): “Governments, and other stakeholders, should establish sustainable multi-purpose community public access points, providing affordable or free-of-charge access for their citizens to the various communication resources, notably the Internet. These access points should, to the extent possible, have sufficient capacity to provide assistance to users, in libraries, educational institutions, public administrations, post offices or other public places, with special emphasis on rural and underserved areas, while respecting intellectual property rights (IPRs) and encouraging the use of information and sharing of knowledge.”

IFLA is also the moderator of the sub-theme ‘Heritage’ in the Action Line C8 which states in C8 23 (c): that “Support efforts to develop and use ICTs for the preservation of natural and, cultural heritage, keeping it accessible as a living part of today’s culture. This includes developing systems for ensuring continued access to archived digital information and multimedia content in digital repositories, and support archives, cultural collections and libraries as the memory of humankind.”

In terms of main achievements in the past ten years, IFLA would highlight:

- The increasing provision of Internet access through all types of libraries all over the world. The IFLA World Report series (2003; 2005; 2007; and 2010) shows that access through public, school, university and research libraries has increased with each survey, and that library users in both developed and developing countries can increasingly expect to find their local library institution offering Internet access at free or low cost .
- Increasing awareness by policymakers of the value of libraries as providers of public access to ICTs, and tools to combat the digital divide. Public libraries are uniquely positioned to offer public Internet access and training to individuals who would otherwise not be connected to the digital world. Achievements in this area are illustrated by (but not limited to) the major country-level projects undertaken by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s ‘Global Libraries’ initiative that has seen substantial government investment in public library systems in countries such as Botswana, Chile, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Ukraine .
- The increasing work being undertaken by public libraries to support development projects and initiatives based on the use of information and sharing of knowledge. There are more than 315,000 public libraries worldwide, 73 percent of them in developing and transitioning countries. The Beyond Access initiative and the Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) Public Library Innovation Programme shows that libraries are partnering with development practitioners and donor agencies to deliver policy objectives in the areas of literacy, education, employment, agriculture and health.
- The embrace and development of open access policies by academic and research libraries worldwide. Open Access is a concept that is overwhelmingly supported by national library associations and implemented at institutional, national and regional levels. Librarians have been active advocates of open access, which facilitates the free, immediate, online availability of research articles, coupled with the rights to use these articles fully in the digital environment. The ROARMAP (Registry of Open Access Repositories Mandatory Archiving Policies) shows that mandates for Open Access, driven by libraries, have increased year on year since 2003 .
- The Vancouver Declaration on Digitization and Preservation . UNESCO organized an international conference The Memory of the World in the Digital age: Digitization and Preservation, in September 2012 in Vancouver, Canada, to explore the key issues affecting the preservation and long-term accessibility of digital documentary heritage. IFLA was represented and actively involved in this conference which resulted in the Vancouver Declaration. The Declaration’s main recommendations included:
  - o A cohesive, conceptual and practical digital strategy to address the management and preservation of recorded information in all its forms in the digital environment;
  - o Digital preservation frameworks and practices for management and preservation;
  - o An international legal framework of copyright exceptions and limitations to ensure preservation of and access to cultural heritage in digital format;

**Q9: How has the implementation of WSIS outcomes contributed towards the development of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society"?**

While we would stand by the statement made in 7 above, we would also consider the work outlined in 8. above to have contributed in some way to progress towards a 'people-centered, inclusive and development-orientated Information Society'. Saying that, while the library community has been pleased to be able to place its achievements within the WSIS context, and to share them with all stakeholders through the WSIS Forums and HLE process, we cannot say that these actions were specifically undertaken in order to reach WSIS objectives.

**Q10: What are the challenges to the implementation of WSIS outcomes? What are the challenges that have inhibited the emergence of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society"?**

While the past ten years have seen great advances in Internet penetration worldwide, and large increases in the ownership of personal Internet-connected devices such as PCs, laptops, tablets and mobile phones, only 35% of the world's population is connected to the Internet. In light of this it is clear that there is still a big challenge to reduce the digital divide and ensure that everyone has access to information in the digital age. Huge numbers of the world's population already rely on public access to ICTs to participate in the information society, and the library community does not see this situation fundamentally changing in a short space of time. We will still need to ensure that the correct infrastructure, funding and information policies are in place to support the participation of all people in the information society, and this means that public access to ICTs at a community level must remain a priority in any post-WSIS framework. IFLA wishes to see policymakers concentrate on ensuring that all members of society have access to ICTs, including those who cannot afford personal devices, and developing frameworks that help people develop media and information literacies that will help them understand the digital environment that they live and work in.

In short: access, and skills.

**Q11: How are these challenges being addressed? What approaches have proved to be effective in your experience?**

IFLA continues to address these challenges by helping libraries promote the provision of public access to ICTs, and the importance of media and information literacy. There are partners across various stakeholder groups who are able to support our work, and as such we consider partnership an effective approach - the challenges are bigger than libraries and we need government and tech sector partners, as well as organisations such as the Alliance for Affordable Internet, to help us overcome them.

In a brief produced for the WSIS HLE, and in another for the 17th meeting of CSTD, IFLA, along with the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and the Technology and Social Change Group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington did make some particular recommendations regarding the challenges:

Governments need to incorporate public access to ICTs into their plans to narrow the digital divide - to support public access through funding and capacity building – both in terms of broadband infrastructure, as well in terms of staff and user training.

By the same token, the private sector should partner with libraries and other public access intermediaries to deliver fast broadband through community access points so that all members of the community can benefit – including those without means to pay for any access at all.

Build awareness and information sharing. There is generally a shortage of knowledge of the importance of public access, and on how to implement and sustain public access facilities, especially in developing countries. Knowledge of best practices and sustainable solutions using the latest technologies needs to be assembled and circulated, in print, in online fora and in training workshops.

Improve the enabling environment – a basic requirement for public access facilities is low-cost high-speed connectivity. This requires a conducive policy and regulatory environment which ensures competitive, pervasive and reliable provision of internet services.

Implement use of universal access funds and other public policy instruments to support public access, not only at the national level but also through provincial or local municipal authorities.

Address human resource deficiencies. Policies need to be aimed at ensuring a sufficient number of appropriately trained people at a technical level to support public access facilities, for their staff to help in the provision of ICT services to the public, and for the public in how to make the most effective use of them, especially by women and other disenfranchised groups.

Invest in locally relevant applications and service development, particularly e-government services. This will help fuel the demand for access and make public access facilities more sustainable. Libraries in particular can be an effective vehicle for supporting the implementation of e-government strategies at the local level.

Set targets and monitor progress. Targets and indicators need to be adopted to enable measurement of progress in providing public access, and in assessing impact. This should be based on an objective methodology for evaluating the quality of access available to the general public.

**Q12: What do you consider the most important emerging trends in technology and other aspects of ICTs which have affected implementation of WSIS outcomes since the Summit? What has been their impact?**

Mobile - a huge impact in getting massive numbers of people online, particularly in developing countries. An equally huge impact in taking up nearly all of the debating space regarding the information society during the ten years since the summit. Mobile was seen, and in many cases still is seen, as the be all and end all for Internet access.

Social Media - virtually unseen in Geneva. Stunning visibility in the years since the launch of the original social media platforms, particularly since the rise of Facebook and Twitter. Regardless of the role of social media in the Green Revolution and The Arab Spring, it can't be denied that these are now mainstream technologies that are seen by virtually all Internet users as a primary method for engaging with citizens/elections/revolutions/talent shows, with all of the attendant opportunities (crowdsourcing, participation, advocacy) and pitfalls (surveillance, invasion of privacy, button-clicking-disguised-as-participation) that come with such a multi-use technology.

Mass Surveillance - state surveillance of citizens is nothing new, but the extent of the surveillance revealed by Edward Snowden in 2013 is something different. It remains to be seen whether the eventual response on behalf of mainstream society is a giant virtual shrug, or a more disciplined rejection of trust in governments (for many paying attention to what governments said about Internet freedom in public, and then what they actually did when left to their own devices, the hypocrisy seems quite prominent) but it would appear that the profile of encryption and personal data security has been raised, even if just a little, as a result of the Snowden revelations.

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**Q13: What should be the priorities for stakeholders seeking to achieve WSIS outcomes and progress towards the Information Society, taking into account emerging trends?**

While the MPP process towards the WSIS+10 HLE outcome document was at times extremely painful, we do feel that in the end a multistakeholder approach yielded some some useful outcome text, including entries that were included in the 'Priority Areas' of the document. For example IFLA agrees with the following priority topics:

- “Supporting providers of public access in the local communities such as libraries to help people access information resources they need and develop information literacy skills to improve their lives.
  - Encouraging governments and intergovernmental organizations as well as private institutions and organisations to pursue policies and programs that advocate for and promote media and information literacy (MIL) and lifelong learning for all, so as to help users develop their abilities to evaluate and interact with online information resources.
  - Ensuring the preservation of digital heritage in the information society by putting into place cohesive, conceptual and practical digital strategies, supported, to the extent practicable, at international level, for the preservation of and access to recorded information in the digital environment in all its forms while respecting individual privacy.”
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**Q14: What role should information and communications play in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda?**

ICT must be seen as a crucial means of implementation for the new post-2015 development agenda. At present it is clear to IFLA that the discussions in New York on the new framework are not being influenced at all by the WSIS process - and this is a shame. It is also equally clear that the discussions in Geneva are taking place in a vacuum, and that no one on the Geneva side seems to know how to get ICT discussions 'imported' into the SDGs and the overall framework. This is disappointing. There has been enough information coming out of WSIS to be quite helpful to those drafting the SDGs, and yet ICTs are mentioned only a few times in the Open Working Group's Outcome Document, and in some very strange places. It is almost as if they were added as an afterthought. IFLA has been proud to be advocating for the inclusion of ICTs when we have participated in the OWG in New York, but we find it bizarre that we are one of the few civil society/ICTD groups who have been actively involved - where are all the organisations from WSIS?

We would like to finish this section by pointing you to IFLA's recently issued Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development which can be found at [www.lyondeclaration.org](http://www.lyondeclaration.org) and has been signed by nearly 300 organisations since its launch on August 18. The Declaration is a statement of principles regarding access to information and development, and calls upon UN Member States to recognise access to information in the new framework. In particular, the final two sections (5 and 6) might be helpful in relation to this questions. The signatories recognise that:

5. Improved ICT infrastructure can be used to expand communications, speed up the delivery of services and provide access to crucial information particularly in remote communities. Libraries and other information intermediaries can use ICTs to bridge the gap between national policy and local implementation to ensure that the benefits of development reach all communities.

6. We, the undersigned, therefore 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 recognised in the post-2015 development agenda by:

- a) Acknowledging the public's right to access information and data, while respecting the right to individual privacy.
- b) Recognising the important role of local authorities, information intermediaries and infrastructure such as ICTs and an open Internet as a means of implementation.
- c) Adopting policy, standards and legislation to ensure the continued funding, integrity, preservation and provision of information by governments, and access by people.
- d) Developing targets and indicators that enable measurement of the impact of access to information and data and reporting on progress during each year of the goals in a Development and Access to Information (DA2I) report.

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**Q15: Please add any other comments that you wish to make on the subject of the review that you believe would be helpful.**

*Respondent skipped this question*

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**Q16: We would also welcome any documents, reports, etc. that you can forward which you think will provide useful evidence for the review. Please send these to [cstd-wsis10@unctad.org](mailto:cstd-wsis10@unctad.org). It would be helpful if you could list these in this box, together with any URL which enables access to them on the World Wide Web.**

IFLA Lyon Declaration:  
[www.lyondeclaration.org](http://www.lyondeclaration.org)

IFLA Trend Report:  
<http://trends.ifla.org>

The Struggle to Scale: Keeping Up With the Internet (Hamilton, S. and Moon, D.)  
<http://www.ifla.org/publications/the-struggle-to-scale-keeping-up-with-the-internet>



