

WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS)

Role and needs of publishers and libraries in the information society

Proposals from the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the International Publishers Association (IPA) for inclusion in the draft Declaration and Action Plan to be discussed at Prepcom 2, Geneva, 17-28 February 2003

20 February 2003

1. Role of creators, publishers and producers of content in the information society

Along with telecommunication providers and users, creators, publishers and libraries are key actors in the information society and we believe the WSIS and any of its programs must reflect this.

The supply of a diversity of creative works and content is an essential engine for social, cultural, political and economic development. Publishers and libraries thus play a crucial role in promoting knowledge, creativity and science. As such, they are fully involved in the information society, which offers enhanced means of communication, dissemination and transmission of knowledge.

2. New Challenges – how to make the most of the Information Society

Principles: The electronic and network environment introduces many changes in the way content is created, produced and disseminated. Publishers and libraries need freedom as well as support to explore the new possibilities. Basic education of the audience, publishers and libraries is a prerequisite for content dissemination.

Recommendations: For content industries to fully contribute to, and benefit from, the new challenges and opportunities:

- They must have facilitated access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) and training, in order to be acquainted with new models of content creation, production and dissemination
- Appropriate incentives for a diversified creation may be needed and an approach respectful of cultural and linguistic identities should be favoured
- Increased government funding for education and literacy
- Connecting users to the internet, especially in developing countries and disadvantaged groups in developed nations
- Providing users, not only children but also parents and teachers, with appropriate training for the use of ICTs and new learning models (distance learning, online textbooks and reference materials)

3. Towards a framework that rewards creativity, diversity and freedom of expression

Principle: Creation and dissemination of digital content necessitate time, effort, skill and investment. Creativity is best stimulated via copyright protection. Copyright encourages progress and diversity and is a requirement, rather than a limitation, for making content available to users. Intellectual property protection promotes innovation and investment and helps develop a market for a large variety of on-line and off-line content.

- While the fundamental principles underlying copyright protection in the print environment remain the same in the electronic environment (in this sense, “digital is not different”), IFLA and IPA recognise that the advent of new technologies has fundamentally changed methods of publication and dissemination as well as rights management (in this sense, “digital is different”)
- Bridging the digital divide is best achieved by government programmes increasing funding for the provision of books and other publications in libraries as well as for connecting end-users to the Internet, especially in developing countries and disadvantaged groups in developed nations
- Exceptions and limitations to copyright in the public interest remain necessary in the electronic environment, in order to maintain an equitable balance between the rights of creators and distributors and the needs of users but the nature and extent of exceptions and limitations must be assessed by applying the three step test as set out in International treaties administered by WIPO: exceptions are confined to special cases which do not conflict with a normal exploitation of the work and do not unreasonably prejudice the legitimate interests of the right holder

Principle: For the information society to provide creative incentives to the best possible extent, creators, publishers and producers of content shall also fully enjoy their right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to publish, as internationally accepted.

Recommendations: Protecting the rights of creators, publishers and producers of content in the information society should include:

- Any regulation which would amount to pre-publication censorship must be avoided, taking into account the usages of different content sectors
- The primary responsibility for determining what content to access should remain with the individual internet user; parents should take the primary responsibility for determining what their children should access
- International co-operation and exchange should be favoured and the development of voluntary best practices should be considered

Concluding remarks

IFLA and IPA, representing publishers and libraries, invite all actors of the WSIS to take the above into full consideration and stand ready to assist WSIS organisers and participants to integrate these proposals in all discussions and documents of the Summit.

This statement is supported by the following organisations:

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)

International Publishers Association (IPA)