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UNESCO, library development and the World Summit on the Information Society

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UNESCO has, since its founding, had a mandate to promote international cooperation and development in communication and information, and for the past decade this theme has formed one of the Organization's five programme sectors. This presentation will stress the role of the library as a gateway to the Information Society and the contribution of UNESCO to the World summit on the Information Society.

As early as in 1947, the Executive Board of UNESCO adopted a programme whose main thrust was the reconstruction and rehabilitation of educational, scientific and cultural life in war-devastated countries, principally in Europe, with the accent on libraries, museums and the free flow of information.

The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto proclaims UNESCO's belief in the public library 'as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women'.

In 1951, Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, opened the first modern public library in New Delhi, the outcome of a UNESCO pilot project. A similar library was later opened in Medellin, Colombia.

What should be the role of the library in the new information context? Library development has always been part of UNESCO's action. It is now a component of its new Information for All Programme. Among the activities of UNESCO relating to library development, the following will be highlighted: CDS/ISIS, the "Memory of the World" Programme, MEDLIB and other virtual libraries, the UNESCO Network of Associated Libraries and the Multipurpose Community Telecentres project.

Information for All Programme

UNESCO's Information for All Programme (IFAP) is a key participant in the fulfilment of UNESCO's mandate to contribute to "education for all", to the "free exchange of ideas and knowledge" and to "increase the means of communication between peoples". The Programme contributes to bridging the digital divide.

The Information for All Programme provides a framework for international co-operation and international and regional partnerships in the information field. It supports the development of common strategies, methods and tools for building a just and free information society and for narrowing the gap between the information rich and the information poor. The main objectives of IFAP are to:

- promote international reflection and debate on the ethical, legal and societal challenges of the information society;
- promote and widen access to information in the public domain through the organization, digitization and preservation of information;
- support training, continuing education and lifelong learning in the fields of communication, information and informatics;
- support the production of local content and foster the availability of indigenous knowledge through basic literacy and ICT literacy training;
 - promote the use of international standards and best practices in communication, information and informatics in UNESCO's fields of competence;
- promote information and knowledge networking at local, national, regional and international levels.

The Programme commissions studies, facilitates co-operation, provides reports and technical assistance on all aspects of access to and management of information. The following examples illustrate how the Programme try to reach its objectives.

CDS/ISIS

The Computerized Documentation System CDS/ISIS is a software package developed and distributed by UNESCO free of charge to libraries and information centres worldwide for almost 20 years now. It has served thousands of people and institutions in automating librarians' daily work, providing computer skills very often used well beyond the purposes of library automation. It has contributed to create demand for new jobs and set de-facto standards in the developing world fostering data exchange.

We do have a database with around 18,000 users worldwide. This does not necessarily include users licensed from regional or country distributors. We might suppose that there are more than 20,000. Some articles talk about 50,000 and even 100,000.

Because of its spread in the developing world, it can be a vehicle for international standards among national and small libraries. A good example is the recent development of CDS/ISIS Marc21Lite support, in co-operation with the Library of Congress. Current plans include development of other Marc formats as well as metadata formats such as Dublin Core.

In order to expand CDS/ISIS coverage of world languages, UNESCO is setting up co-operation with an international organization, SIL, for the development of tools that will make use of UNICODE and other technologies for representing various scripts.

Free Software Portal

The UNESCO Free Software Portal gives access to documents and websites which provide good reference works for the Free Software/Open Source Technology movement. It is also a gateway to resources related to Free Software.

With the Free Software Portal, UNESCO provides a single interactive access point to pertinent information for users who wish to acquire an understanding of the Free Software movement, to learn why it is important and to apply the concept.

Visitors to the UNESCO Free Software Portal can browse through pre-established categories or search for specific words. They can add a new link or modify an already existing link. http://www.unesco.org/webworld/portal_freesoft

UNESCO Libraries Portal

The UNESCO Libraries Portal was launched in January 2001 as a service facilitating access to information related to library resources available on the World Wide Web as well as to issues affecting librarianship. The site, which currently has over 10,000 links, is an interactive resource on information in a range of categories including websites of libraries, conferences, training and job opportunities as well as other resources related to information management and to international co-operation in these fields. It is being developed as a focal point or the concentration of experiences, for both specialists and the public.

Libraries Portal can be visited at: http://www.unesco.org/webworld/portal_bib

Memory of the World

In 1992 recognizing that urgent action was required to stem the disappearance of vast parts of the world's documentary memory UNESCO launched the 'Memory of the World'¹ Programme to protect and promote that heritage. The two main objectives of the Programme are preservation and access.

Preservation of the documentary heritage and increased access to it complement one another, in as much as access facilitates protection and preservation ensures access.

The Programme also seeks to increase awareness of the importance of documentary heritage in the Member States and particularly of that heritage which is a part of a common world memory. A 'Memory of the World' Register lists documentary heritage which has been identified as meeting the selection criteria for world significance, similar in some ways to UNESCO's World Heritage List. To date 68 collections from 33 countries are inscribed:

<http://www.unesco.org/webworld/mdm/register/index.html>

Finally, the Programme seeks to develop products based on the documentary heritage and make them available for wide distribution, while ensuring that the originals are maintained in the best possible conditions of conservation and security. Some 30 projects have resulted in the publication of albums, books, postcards, microfilms, discs, web sites, etc.

¹ Memory of the World web site: http://www.unesco.org/webworld/mdm/en/index_mdm.html

Within the framework of the “Memory of the World” Programme a worldwide survey on digital collections and their preservation is being conducted in cooperation with IFLA.

Preservation of the Digital Heritage

There is a great deal of uncertainty towards the preservation of digital information and professional circles have become more and more anxious about the safeguard of these new documents.

UNESCO has developed a strategy for the promotion of digital preservation. This strategy is centred on: a) a wide consultation process with governments, policy makers, producers of information, heritage institutions and experts, the software industry as well as standard-setting organisations; b) dissemination of technical guidelines; c) implementation of pilot projects and; d) and preparation of a draft charter on the preservation of digital heritage for adoption by the General Conference at its 32nd session.

Library of Alexandria

The revival of the Ancient Library of Alexandria Project aims at building a universal modern public library to be a centre of culture, science and academic research. Drawing its inspiration from the Ancient Library of Alexandria, the famous library of antiquity, this modern public research institution is now accessible to scholars, researchers and the public at large. UNESCO has been associated with the Bibliotheca Alexandrina since its inception in the mid-1980's. Much more than just a library, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina complex includes a Conference Center, Planetarium, International School of Information Studies, Library for the Blind, Science Museum, Calligraphy Museum, as well as a Restoration Laboratory.

Remarkable in its architecture yet resolutely functional, the main Library building is shaped like a long cylinder 160 meters wide with the top truncated at an angle. The angle of the roof counters harmful effects of sea spray and allows the upper stories of the Library to enjoy natural light. The roof symbolizes the dissemination of knowledge among the different peoples. The building is surrounded by a wall clad with Aswan granite engraved with calligraphic letters and representative inscriptions from the world civilizations. The Official Inauguration of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina took place on October 16, 2002.

Central University Library in Bucharest Romania

The Central University Library in Bucharest was set on fire during the events of December 1989. More than 500.000 volumes were turned to ashes.

In April 1990, Federico Mayor, then Director-General of UNESCO, launched an appeal by which he called all governments, organisations and political institutions to participate in the re-construction and modernisation of the library.

A huge restoration work was started together with the expansion of the library building and the recovery of the library collection.

The library automation work was initiated with CDS/ISIS and replaced later by VUBIS integrated system. The new library was inaugurated in November 2001.

National Library of Latvia

The objectives of the project are:

- To stimulate cultural revival and development in the Eastern European and Baltic Regions;
- To support the nation's goal to participate actively in Baltic, European and global economy;
- Share Latvia's cultural heritage with the world;
- To provide critical information resources for the national educational system;
- To help build a competitive work force;
- To provide free public access to global information systems.

UNESCO has set up an International Commission of Experts for the National Library of Latvia (NLL). The role of this Commission is of a consultative and advisory nature. Its members contribute to the development of the National Library of Latvia project, in particular by:

- providing methodological and technical support;
- assisting in the mobilization of financial resources and resources in kind through fund-raising campaigns and sensitization of the professional and political communities;
- developing a communication strategy.

The results achieved by the International Commission of Experts include awareness raising and mobilisation of Parliament and public opinion, also co-operation with a number of European national libraries and the Library of Congress which invited a group of Latvian librarians for training in the field of preservation and digitisation.

National Library of Nepal

We have in Nepal a project called Reorganization of the Nepal National Library (NNL) in Support of Literacy Programme. The project aims to reorganise the NNL, train and upgrade the skills of the staff at all levels, improve the facilities and collection, setting up adequate central service, providing the service to the general public in Kathmandu, setting up 4 pilot branch libraries in different development regions of the country, developing a model for a public library system and community centres to service the village population, and promoting the publishing of Nepali literature by encouraging writers, publishers and printers. The project was initiated in 1995 and finished in 2002. Funds for a second phase where the mobile library is to be developed under the Information for All programme (IFA) to support Education for All (EFA) are still lacking.

Sarajevo Library

Ten years ago, in the night of 25 to 26 August 1992, gunners occupying the hills surrounding Sarajevo destroyed the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In a recent report, Library Director Enes Kujundzic describes how the staff of the Library intensively worked to reconstruct collections and revive its functions in temporary premises, with assistance by UNESCO, the World Bank and the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Library has increased its staff, accelerated its operations and has moved to the premises

allocated to the Library in the former Tito Barracks which have been refurbished under UNESCO and World Bank funding. Presently, the Library has at its disposal about 1,400m² for stock areas, user areas and office space. The Slovenian Institute for Information Sciences (IZUM) provides its *Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services* (COBISS) to the Library.

Rehabilitation of libraries in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine

An expert group representing UNESCO, the Council of Europe and IFLA to assess the situation of libraries in Kosovo carried out a mission in March 2000. The experts examined the possibilities to include libraries in the rehabilitation efforts and the development of democratic self governance in Kosovo. The team prepared an action plan that includes short-term projects and attempts to point out longer-term strategies.

The action plan includes a proposed range of 11 special programmes to be established, each covering different needs and aspects of library activities:

1. Legislation and administration programme
2. Mobile library service programme
3. Reconstruction Programme
4. Book and Reading Programme
5. Information Technology Programme
6. Professional Training and Development Programme
7. Cultural Heritage Programme
8. Children and Youth Programme
9. Open access programme
10. Initiative Support Programme
11. Twinning Programme

The suggested programmes vary in nature and financial weight. An initial and very rough estimate of the funding needed for basic short-term measures amounts to around DM 14 millions.

The first programme outlines the structural basis on which the rehabilitation process can be founded. The five programmes requiring the most immediate initiative and a heavy part of external funding are the Mobile Library Programme, the Reconstruction Programme, The Professional Training and Development Programme, the Books and Reading Programme, and the Information Technology Programme. There are important correlations between these programmes: The reconstruction of buildings is a longer-term task, which may take some years. Therefore mobile library services are suggested as a fairly immediate compensatory initiative. The buildings themselves have no value without books, technology or qualified library professionals.

The Cultural Heritage Programme aims to provide practical solutions to urgent preservation and security needs. The Children and Youth programme and the Open Access Programme are of a more library political nature with the aim to reform and strengthen certain important aspects of the societal role of libraries. The last two programmes are suggesting the establishment of specific tools to ensure and promote local involvement and participation.

UNESCO's efforts to rebuild libraries in Kosovo could serve as a model that could be

followed in the rehabilitation of Palestinian libraries and libraries in Afghanistan and Iraq. The American Library Association has passed a resolution on the Destruction of Palestinian Libraries, Archives and Other Cultural Institutions, at its annual meeting last June and invited UNESCO to cooperate with IFLA and their study group on Palestinian libraries.

UNAL NETWORK

UNAL's principal objective is to encourage public libraries to undertake activities related to UNESCO's main goals such as the promotion of human rights and peace, cultural dialogue, protection of the environment, fight against illiteracy, etc. and to establish contacts between libraries of the North and of the South.

Members organize exhibitions, literary events, debates and lectures, exchanges of material and information, seminars, twinning arrangements, usually on a voluntary basis, as a means of promoting UNESCO's ideals.

325 Member Libraries in 80 UNESCO Member States currently participate in the Network.

The following are 2 examples of activities carried out within UNAL.

1. Integration of ICTs in Library and Documentation Centres in Africa

African countries are hampered in their efforts to obtain information relevant to their needs through the high cost of access both to the Internet and to traditional means; insufficient access points and the lack of African content on the information highway. In seeking to prepare a regional programme, the aims of workshops held in Africa were to sensitize and provide an overview of ICTs in library applications as a means of establishing inter-library co-operation and creating a public domain of African content. Libraries and documentation centres are therefore in a privileged position in the actual context to become key players in the development of the community.

2. EX-LIBRIS

This is an annual competition organized by the Slovak member in Hlohovec. The goals are to promote children's creativity by encouraging their participation in an interesting activity - the creation of bookplates - and to help them appreciate the different viewpoints of unfamiliar cultures. Open to children aged 12 to 15 years, every year a different theme is chosen for the submission of entries. This year, the sixth, was on "My Dream". An exhibition of selected entries has then been sent to other participating UNAL Libraries to further strengthen cooperation activities among members of the Network.

Multipurpose community telecentres

Innovative solutions are especially needed to ensure access to information and ICTs by the rural, poor and otherwise disadvantaged communities which make up the bulk of the population in the developing countries. One approach is the community owned and managed multipurpose community telecentre (MCT) - a sustainable and largely self-supporting development platform which can be installed in public areas including schools, libraries, community centres or post offices to provide ICT facilities and associated training support for both development activities and individual users. An MCT provides a range of ICT support

(telephone, fax, Internet, photocopy, computers) and enables local communities to gain access to and produce development-oriented information, especially in remote, rural and undeveloped areas where information and communication facilities are limited.

Building on models first developed in northern Europe, Australia and Canada starting in 1985, many developing countries have been testing approaches to MCTs in the past few years. As one key example, six pilot MCTs have been established in five least developed countries of Sub-Saharan Africa with the assistance of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the ITU, UNESCO under DANIDA funds in trust, and several other international partners in specific countries. At the core of these centres is the community library exploiting local document holdings and national and world-wide electronic information banks, and the community learning centre function in support of literacy campaigns, and basic and non-formal education. MCTs can link to "traditional" rural media for outreach activities, and five of the six centres are now associated with community radios to become community multimedia centres (CMCs).

UNESCO is working with Member States to promote the roll-out of sustainable networks of such community information and communication facilities, based on enabling national policies and the sharing of resources and experience in such areas as connectivity, acquisition and maintenance of equipment, training and application development.

Digital libraries

UNESCO is working with the New Zealand Digital Library Project (NZDL) of the University of Waikato (New Zealand) and the Human Info NGO (Antwerp) to prepare and distribute on CD-ROM a tri-lingual (English-French-Spanish) version of the open source Greenstone Digital Library software. This package has already been used by UNESCO in preparing two electronic anthologies for development in Africa, and has been used by Human Info NGO to develop a vast set of Humanitarian and Development Libraries of public domain and open access documents. It is hoped that Greenstone will support the production and sharing of wide range of compatible digital library applications. A series of regional workshops for the training of trainers in the use of Greenstone is underway. A module for management of bibliographic data and metadata for digital collections based on Dublin Core (and compatible with CDS/ISIS) is under development, to replace the rather restricted present provisions of Greenstone.

The Virtual Library of the Mediterranean

The Mediterranean basin possesses incomparable cultural, linguistic and historical treasures which are the products of a long history of exchanges, reciprocal influences and migrations which continue today. This is a region where libraries have played and will always play a vital part in the development, conservation and dissemination of knowledge which is gradually being transformed by the modern concept of information.

The Mediterranean Virtual Library (MEDLIB²) is situated in this context. The principal aim is to bring together on the Internet, the documentary heritage of the Mediterranean whether produced in the region or elsewhere.

² MEDLIB web site: <http://www.unesco.org/webworld/mediter/medlib.htm>

MEDLIB, by focusing on the Mediterranean, is comparable to other UNESCO initiatives such as the Silk Road and Slave Route projects, which are based on specific, rallying themes. Different questions arise, in particular that of ascertaining what the specific nature of a virtual library for the Mediterranean is. Many Mediterranean libraries are linked to the Internet, and had embarked upon programmes to digitize their collection, and create an electronic version of their catalogue. This is the case in Spain, France, Israel and Italy, where different projects were well under way, and in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine and Tunisia, where projects to develop an electronic library were launched more recently.

The activities carried out in the framework of MEDLIB cover all library issues such as authority lists, thesauri, and union catalogues. These issues are being considered in a multi-language and multi-script context. Arabic manuscripts, exchanges between peoples, poetry, and the translation of thesauri were quoted as examples of areas in which relatively short-term projects could be implemented.

Aspects of methodology, standards, and interoperability of library systems are being implemented in a medium- and long-term perspective. These projects aim at developing means of access and data exchange among libraries and between libraries and users, in a multi-language and multi-script context. Several levels of standards are identified:

- cataloguing standards: a ‘common core’ is necessary to enable searches to be carried out on different catalogues and on data distributed over different databases
- linguistic standards for information searches on different systems, in a multi-script (UNICODE or ISO 10.646 standards allow all alphabets to be represented);
- standards for establishing relations between documents or sets of documents, in order to draw classifications, comparisons and equivalences between documents or sets of documents.

Palestinian Virtual Library

The Universities of Birzeit and Al Quds in Jerusalem are cooperating in the preparation of a union catalogue. The two universities which use the MINISIS software to manage their catalogues have decided on a joint effort which allows access to the collections in either university irrespective of the location of the searcher. For the project managers, this initiative is viewed as the start of a digital Palestinian academic library and the debut of a Palestinian academic network.

There are many historical documents concerning the Palestinian cultural heritage (archives, photographs, manuscripts, old printed books, maps, etc ...) which are scattered between public and private collections in the Middle East as well as in other Mediterranean and European countries.

There is currently no common project to bring these materials together, nor is there a collective effort to build a national library, which in any case would face major obstacles because of the political and security situation, as well as the fact that the areas under control of the Palestinian authority aren’t connected and Palestinians cannot move from one area to the others.

Building a virtual national Palestinian library which would involve not only the Palestinian authorities but Palestinian universities, traditional Palestinian family collections, European and Mediterranean libraries and collections, and other bodies, this would prefigure the creation of a well established, formal Palestinian national library in the future.

Ibero-American and Caribbean Digital Library

This project is oriented to:

- a) stimulate the creation of National Digital Libraries in LAC;
- b) train people in digitization, cataloguing, publication and managing multimedia collections on Internet;
- c) strengthen coordination among the LAC National Libraries taking advantage of their cultural and linguistic similitude in the framework of the DL project;
- d) learn how to manage a digital collection and plan its development and preservation.

To reach these objectives a methodology was developed, containing four modules:

- a) Digitization;
- b) Cataloguing and description of the digital information published on Internet;
- c) Software toolkit for the creation of a Z.3950 server for Windows and Linux Platforms;
- d) Managing a digital library.

To train the designated specialists from the National Libraries, a professional Distance Education platform was selected after the evaluation of 23 different available platforms. To assume this activity a Regional UNESCO Chair on Information Technologies was created at the University of Colima, and a Degree Diploma on Digital Library was established. 31 specialists from 15 National Libraries have already completed the two first courses on Digitization and on Managing Digital Libraries.

More information is available at: <http://bdigital.ucol.mx>.

Learning without frontiers and E-reference

At the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, March 1990) the leaders of the world adopted an expanded vision of basic education that surpasses present resource levels, institutional structure, curricula and conventional delivery systems. UNESCO has responded to this challenge by initiating “Learning without Frontiers” (LWF). LWF aims to promote diversified and open learning systems in the perspective of lifelong learning. ICTs provide opportunities for greater flexibility, interactivity and accessibility in education through multi-channel applications such as interactive radio and television, audio and video conferencing, Internet based virtual communities, Web publishing and CD-ROM tutorials. They can dramatically expand the options for engaging in teaching and learning at individual, community and societal levels, especially for those who have not been able to obtain an education, due to inadequate facilities or to barriers such as age limitations, educational fees, or language of instruction.

Through ICTs, learning opportunities can be made available on a 24-hour basis, thereby establishing an important condition for an open learning environment. ICTs also provide

opportunities to build local knowledge structures, which can in turn be shared with a larger audience in the context of our global society. Examples of projects on educational application of ICTs underway are: Educational Application of Interactive TV, Learning Networks for African Teachers, Learning environments for virtual schools and virtual universities. We are also preparing in co-operation with IFLA and Aberdeen Business School in Scotland a set of 'Guidelines for e-reference library services for distance learners and other remote users'. This work will:

- establish the basic principles for reference and information services in support of distance learning;
- promote good practice covering the whole process from examining e-reference enquiries to the presentation and delivery of information to the end user;
- identify appropriate strategies for making effective use of new Information and Communication Technologies in e-reference work and developing effective gateways to e-information resources;
- indicate additional e-resources to assist library staff working in the field, including in developing countries.

UNESCO and the World Summit on the Information Society

UNESCO attaches very high importance to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) recognizing that the two meetings of the Summit, in Geneva, 10-12 December 2003 and in Tunis in 2005, are major events on the global agenda.

UNESCO has fully supported the WSIS preparatory process from its beginning acting on two levels: on the one hand, the governmental level involving Members States, mainly through their National Commissions for UNESCO and, on the other hand, on the non-governmental level through professional communities and civil society.

In both cases, UNESCO has succeeded to define and promote its positions setting the ground for its contribution to the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action that the Summit is expected to adopt. Many of these positions have already been recognized in the preparatory process.

From the Information Society to Knowledge Societies

UNESCO's proposals for the elements to be included in the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action are based on its specific mandate. This mandate leads UNESCO to promote the concept of *knowledge societies* rather than that of global *information society* since enhancing information flows alone is not sufficient to grasp the opportunities for development that is offered by knowledge. Therefore, a more complex, holistic and comprehensive vision and a clearly developmental perspective are needed.

The proposals are responses to the three main challenges posed by the construction of knowledge societies: first, to narrow the digital divide that accentuates disparities in development, excluding entire groups and countries from the benefits of information and knowledge; second to guarantee the free flow of, and equitable access to, data, information, best practices and knowledge in the information society; and third to build international consensus on newly required norms and principles.

Four Principles

There are four principles that are essential for the development of equitable knowledge societies:

- Cultural diversity
- Equal access to education
- Universal access to information (in the public domain)
- Freedom of expression

Indeed, knowledge societies should be strongly based on a commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression. Knowledge societies should also ensure the full realization of the right to education and of all cultural rights. In knowledge societies, access to the public domain of information and knowledge for educational and cultural purposes should be as broad as possible. Information should be of high quality, diversified and reliable. An important principle of knowledge societies should be the diversity of cultures and languages.

Three strategic objectives

To realize these principles UNESCO works towards the attainment of three strategic objectives: (a) to foster digital opportunities and social inclusion enhancing the use of ICTs for capacity-building, empowerment, governance and social participation; (b) to strengthen capacities for scientific research, information sharing and cultural creations, performances and exchanges in knowledge societies; and (c) to enhance learning opportunities through access to diversified contents and delivery systems.

Objective I: Fostering digital opportunities and social inclusion

Knowledge Societies are only equitable if all people, including disadvantaged groups (e.g. people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, people living in extreme poverty), as well as women and youth benefit equally from ICTs for network strengthening, information sharing, creating knowledge resources and developing skills necessary for life/work in the new digital environment.

The use of ICTs should be encouraged as a means of empowering local communities and help them combat marginalization, poverty and exclusion, especially in Africa and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The enhancement of dialogue between citizens and public authorities should be one of the major objectives of knowledge societies. They should be based on the sharing of information and the genuine participation of social groups at various levels.

Objective II: Strengthening capacities for scientific research, cultural creation and information sharing

For knowledge societies to be equitable participation in all forms of intellectual life for educational, scientific, cultural and communication purposes should be ensured. The production and dissemination of educational, scientific and cultural materials and the preservation of the digital heritage should be regarded as crucial elements of knowledge societies. Networks of specialists and of virtual interest groups should be developed, as they are key to efficient and effective exchanges and cooperation in knowledge societies.

Objective III: Enhancing learning opportunities through access to diversified contents and delivery systems

ICTs should contribute to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, the sharing of knowledge and information. ICTs have the potential to introduce in the educational process a higher degree of flexibility in response to societal needs. The potential of ICTs to lower the cost of education and to improve internal and external efficiencies of the education system should be grasped. Knowledge societies should offer opportunities to use ICTs as innovative and experimental tools in the process of renewing education.

ICTs are to be seen both as educational discipline and as pedagogical tools capable of enhancing the effectiveness of educational services. A broad-based dialogue among all stakeholders and consensus should be built at national and international levels. This can yield strategies and policies for expanding access to education and learning, progressing towards Education for All (EFA) targets at country level and renewing formal and non formal education systems.

Concluding remarks

UNESCO is committed in cooperation with IFLA and similar bodies to enable libraries and librarians to participate more fully in the emerging information society. Librarians have an important role to play in the Information Age. They fight for important ideas like freedom of expression and thought, equality of access to information, and literacy. They know how to consolidate, and add value to, information. They are used to serve the public by finding, evaluating, selecting, organizing, describing, and creating quality information resources. They have the opportunity to bring some order and organization to the Internet.

Librarians in the 21st century will participate in the restructuring of the learning environment, dealing with the shrinking life cycle of information and demands for flexible, self-paced learning. They will uphold the values that go back to the basic ideals of librarianship, in the greatest tradition of public libraries. Librarians have seen the computer world change many times, from the mainframes to the microprocessor to the personal computer to the world-wide Web. And yet, through all of this technological change, the old good values of co-operation, sharing and working together for the public good have endured. This set of values is a priceless commons for the world's libraries and librarians- a commons built through collaboration. It enables libraries and librarians around the world to work together to expand access to the world's information resources.