

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) brief

This brief will assist in understanding the IGF, dynamic coalition on public access in libraries, why it is important to participate in the IGF, what is needed to participate, remote participation and where to get more information on the IGF 2012.

Understanding the IGF

The IGF was established by the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society www.itu.int/wsis/ in 2005; with the first IGF held in Athens in 2006. The IGF brings together representatives from various stakeholder groups (governments, businesses, and civil society) to discuss public policy issues relating to the Internet. It seeks to understand how to maximise opportunities, identify emerging trends and address risks and challenges in the Internet environment. While there is no negotiated outcome, the IGF informs and inspires those with policy-making power in both the public and private sectors. Ultimately, the involvement of all stakeholders is necessary for the future development of the Internet. Therefore the IGF is a space that gives developing countries the same opportunity as wealthier nations to engage in the debate on Internet governance and treats all 1500-2000 participants as equals. Participation to the IGF is open to all interested participants and accreditation is free. It's one of a special features of IGF that it is not a treaty conference, but a place for equal dialogue of all interested groups, or individuals.

What is the Dynamic Coalition on Public Access in Libraries?

Dynamic Coalitions (DCs) are informal, multi-stakeholder, issue-specific interest groups that work during the year in preparation for the IGF event, as well as engaging in issue-specific discussions. In 2011, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) organised **The Dynamic Coalition on Public Access in Libraries** at the 2011 IGF. These two organisations represent the interests of tens of thousands of public libraries, and millions of users, in all countries at the IGF. DCs are open to anyone interested in contributing to their discussions. During the IGF, DCs are given a time slot to host a session, and report on their progress and plans.

Why librarians should to participate in the IGF?

Public libraries, as public access points to the Internet, are on the agenda of the IGF as a cross-cutting issue on a number of IGF key themes (e.g. Internet Governance and Development; Access and Diversity; Security, Openness and Privacy, Youth). The IGF is an opportunity to create a dialogue between library representatives, policy makers and the other stakeholders participating at the IGF on the potential of public libraries in major policy areas related to Internet and development such as access to information, education, security, openness and privacy. It is an opportunity to advocate for sustainable funding and favourable policies towards libraries.

How can I participate in the IGF?

- **Regional IGF participation:** Regional and national IGF meetings are held throughout the year, and throughout the world. Visit the IGF Calendar to find a meeting in your area. It's a good first step to participate a closest IGF to start moving forward. The advantages of regional and national IGFs are: opportunity for direct dialogue with your country government, private sector and civil society representatives, raising issues which are specific to your country/national/regional context. Ideas and development of multistakeholders units are flowing up to an international arena – global IGF.

- **Global IGF participation:** global IGF is an annual event, holding by UN, each time in different place of the world. See IGF website to know more about global IGF. IGF has no participations fees, it has preregistration online and registration onsite both. The advantages of global IGF participation: moving advocacy issues on international arena, getting support from another countries and international organizations experience, getting international contacts for collaboration, searching for international organization's grants support.
- **Remote participation:** The IGF has been working to become a fully accessible online event, through live streaming of all its sessions, including approximately 200 workshops, opening and closing ceremonies, and the thematic main sessions. Remote participation provides an opportunity to actively participate at the sessions, from intervening with questions to remote moderation of the workshops.
- **Remote Hubs:** Libraries can also participate as remote "hubs" where a live stream of the IGF is offered to all interested people unable attend the IGF. Hub participants can watch the webcast together and send questions (via text or video) that will be answered by panellists in IGF. In addition, hub organizers can hold debates to discuss the themes introduced at the IGF from their local perspective.

What do I need to participate in the IGF?

It is important for a participating librarian to understand that s/he represents the library community at both a national and regional levels, the IFLA and the Dynamic Coalition on Public Access in Libraries' position on internet issues, and to have the professional "tools" to be a strong library advocate. Below is a checklist to help one prepare:

- Gain support of your library organisations or library associations/societies before attending—these agencies make the strongest representatives.
- Identify your goals for participation. It could be: library advocacy, dissemination of IFLA position, partnership searching, getting necessary knowledge and skills.
- Identify fields of your interests in IGF: what issues do you planning to cover by your participation, what personal and organizational contacts are you interested. Be prepare to know something about them before you going IGF.
- Formulate your talking points, such as:
 - If we are talking about social development, improving lives in 21 century, we understand it couldn't be manage without modern ICT, digital inclusion. And best place to provide social inclusion through digital inclusion is a public library, where you can find not only Internet access providing, but also experienced navigation, practical help from a professional – a librarian;
 - Libraries are public institutions where access to ICT brings public good;
 - Libraries meet the critical information needs of their communities: educational, legislative, health, ecological, municipal, business, tourist information and so on.
 - Libraries can be key partners in the development of e-government services;

- There are more than 230,000 public libraries in developing and transitioning countries. These are logical, existing access points for ICT;
 - Libraries are existing for centuries, they are trusted institutions. Governments can use such a good already existing social platform for social development.
- Build your background knowledge on IFLA positions and WSIS:
- Awareness of background WSIS and IGF documents, ways of participating into the preparatory phases particularly in the national IGFs;
 - Awareness of IFLA position on role of libraries in Information Society, development, freedom of expression, access to information, Intellectual Property Rights;
 - Awareness of IFLA basic documents on information access, censorship and professional ethics;
 - Awareness of national or regional level professional library organization/association position on role of libraries in Information Society, main strategy documents, code of ethics.

Where can I get more information?

IGF website: <http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/>

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