

HOW LIBRARIES CAN CONNECT THE NEXT FOUR BILLION

Half of the world's population lacks access to information online. In our knowledge society, libraries provide access and opportunity for all.

Around the world, public access to information enables people to make informed decisions that can improve their lives. Communities that have access to timely and relevant information for all are better positioned to eradicate poverty and inequality, improve agriculture, provide quality education, and support people's health, culture, research, and innovation.ⁱ

Libraries guarantee access to information — a cross-cutting target that supports all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The knowledge society is about more than Internet connections. Worldwide, 320,000 public libraries and more than a million parliamentary, national, university, science and research, school, and special libraries ensure that information and the skills to use it are available to everyone — making them critical institutions for all in the digital age. Libraries provide information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, help people develop the capacity to effectively use information, and preserve information to ensure ongoing access for future generations. They provide an established,

trusted network of local institutions that effectively reach new and marginalised populations.

Library services contribute to improved outcomes across the SDGs by:

- Promoting universal literacy, including media and information literacy
- Closing gaps in access to information and helping government, civil society, and business to better understand local information needs
- Providing a network of delivery sites for government programmes and services
- Advancing digital inclusion through access to ICT, and dedicated staff to help people develop new digital skills
- Serving as the heart of the research and academic community
- Preserving and providing access to the world's culture and heritage



Digital Inclusion: In Indonesia, **82%** of public library visitors increased their use of technology as a result of library services (2015).ⁱⁱ



Economic Development: In Ukraine, 1 in 3 public library visitors (34%) used technology at the public library for business communications, and **62%** of those who used library services to apply for a job received a job offer (2014).ⁱⁱ



Health: In Botswana, **87%** of library visitors say their health improved as a result of the health information they found using public library services (2014).ⁱⁱ

Libraries are ready to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Libraries are proven, cost-effective partners for advancing development priorities. Many countries have designated libraries as UN depositories, making them an important venue for information about the UN and the SDGs. Libraries are already supporting progress toward specific SDGs including:

- **Increasing income for small-scale food producers (Goal 2):** In Romania, public library staff trained by the Biblionet programmeⁱⁱⁱ worked with local government to help 100,000 farmers use new ICT services to apply for agricultural subsidies, resulting in US\$187 million reaching local communities in 2011-2012.
- **Promoting lifelong learning opportunities (Goal 4):** In Botswana, public libraries have taken large strides toward supporting the government's objectives under its National Vision 2016, including introducing ICT access, improving the computer skills of library users, and enabling users to be successful in business, education, and employment.^{iv} In New York City, 19 library branches have specialized adult learning centres that offer classes in pre-GED, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), adult literacy, citizenship, and ICT skills. Four branches in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens offer job placement services through the city's Workforce1 Career Centers.^v
- **Empowering women and girls (Goal 5):** The National Library of Uganda has provided ICT training specifically designed for female farmers,^{vi} ensuring that these women can access weather forecasts, crop prices, and support to set up online markets, in their local languages.
- **Ensuring productive employment and decent work (Goal 8):** In the European Union in 2012, 4.1 million people used public library computers to support employment-related activities — 1.5 million used library computers to apply for jobs, and more than a quarter of a million secured jobs this way.^{vii} In New York City, the Science, Industry and Business Library, Queens Public Library, and Brooklyn's Business & Career Library (B&CL) run popular business plan competitions that offer guidance to participants, targeting current and prospective business owners from underserved communities. At B&CL, 25 percent of the participants are immigrants, 29 percent are unemployed or underemployed, and more than half have a household income below the median in New York City.^{viii}

For more information about working with libraries to promote sustainable development, visit: www.ifla.org/libraries-development.



IFLA: The trusted global voice of the library and information profession (www.ifla.org). The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users.



IREX is an international nonprofit organisation providing thought leadership and innovative programs to promote positive lasting change globally (www.irex.org).



Beyond Access is a movement of people and organisations committed to the idea that modern public libraries help drive economic and social development (www.beyondaccess.net). Beyond Access is implemented by IREX.

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