



## **IFLA Statement on open access – clarifying IFLA's position and strategy<sup>i</sup>**

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is committed to the principles of freedom of access to information and the belief that universal and equitable access to information is vital for the social, educational, cultural, democratic, and economic well-being of people, communities, and organizations.

Open access is the now known name for a concept, a movement and a business model whose goal is to provide free access and re-use of scientific knowledge in the form of research articles, monographs, data and related materials. Open access does this by shifting today's prevalent business models of after-publication payment by subscribers to a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Thus, open access is an essential issue within IFLA's information agenda.

### **Definition of open access**

As an initial action, IFLA has signed the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities. IFLA adheres to the definition of open access used in the Berlin Declaration and will use it in public communication and contacts with various organizations<sup>ii</sup>.

### **A clear focus on the access issue**

IFLA acknowledges that there are a number of worthwhile objectives, besides open access, concerning the development of the system of scientific and scholarly communication, such as

- implementing a rigorous system for the control of scientific quality;
- providing long-term preservation of research information;
- safeguarding freedom from censorship;
- offering efficient and user-friendly services;
- fostering activities that support "information literacy";
- expanding bandwidth and other essential infrastructure that underlies robust access to information.

There is a positive synergy between promoting open access and pursuing these other essential objectives, and IFLA supports a number of activities related to them; however, they are not identical to open access as herein defined, and neither requires the other. IFLA will promote open access with a clear focus on the access issue.

### **The current model does not guarantee access and is not sustainable**

As the rate and amount of research publication in various forms is rapidly expanding, the current predominant scholarly communication model – via scholarly journals subscriptions – is hardly sustainable and not working effectively in the interests of the global community. Scholarly journals are subject to rapid price escalations and there are no clear and consistent correlations between price, quality and impact. Even the most well endowed research library cannot afford to purchase all of the content requested by its faculty and students.

The situation is even more critical for smaller college and universities and largely unacceptable for institutions in the developing world, with severely limited or no budgets. Existing development initiatives to some extent compensate for the lack of access to crucial information, but these initiatives are dependent on publisher decisions, which are made unilaterally.

There is growing dissatisfaction among major players. Authors are concerned because their work is not seen by all their peers, they may not get the global recognition they seek, and often they continue, even unnecessarily, to transfer copyright, which limits the use and reuse of their own works. Readers cannot access all the scholarly literature they need, and thus their research activities can be less effective. Society as a whole suffers from inefficient communication channels that prevent innovations and development. The widespread sharing of research results is an essential component of governments' investment in science. Faster and wider sharing of knowledge fuels the advancement of science and, accordingly, the return of health, economic, and social benefits back to the public. Not surprisingly, librarians have been amongst the most vocal advocates for open access.

### **The benefits of open access**

There are significant gains to making research and research results available without financial, legal and technical barriers to access. Researchers benefit from increased visibility, usage and impact for their work. Open access helps to publicise institutions' research strengths. For publishers, open access brings maximum visibility, increased readership and impact for the contents; it means that a greatly improved dissemination service is being provided for research. Open access enhances the flow of knowledge between North and South and also between South and South.

### **Open access and the changing role of libraries**

Libraries play an essential role in open access developments by their expertise in building infrastructure, in creating user-friendly services of high quality and in securing long-term access. Librarians have shown their support for open access by signing open access initiatives and petitions. They have educated faculty and administrators about evolving scholarly communication environment. Libraries have partnered with faculty and research managers to set up open access repositories and to help faculty and students deposit their research outputs. Librarians have provided support in research data curation and sharing. They have helped scholarly publishers to publish open access journals and books, and they have worked with educators to produce open educational resources ensuring the quality of digital content, its reuse and sharing. Open access has thus changed the profile of academic and research libraries. National libraries are involved in developing national open access policies and supporting national research infrastructures and open access to cultural heritage. Public libraries disseminate open access content targeted for their users. And, according to the IFLA World Report 2010, the vast majority of library associations support open access.

### **Promoting open access in cooperating with international organizations**

IFLA will work with global organizations and fora such as UN, UNESCO, WHO, WIPO, WSIS and others in promoting and advocating open access to publicly funded research, educational resources and cultural heritage. In its contacts and cooperation with these organizations, IFLA will explicitly state that open access in its authoritative meaning is required for the progress of science, the development of society and

true citizenship. Open access will provide users with the access they desire and enable libraries to maximize their role, thus improving global health and human well-being.

### **Connecting to the open access movement**

Open access to research, educational resources and research data is now a global movement. Many organizations are working towards this goal. IFLA will connect to these organizations, not duplicating effort, but rather creating synergy.

IFLA will establish partnerships with and provide support to organizations, programmes, initiatives and services that are promoting of Open Access, such as SPARC (US/Europe/Japan), COAR, OASPA, Bioline International & DOAJ, among others.

IFLA will prepare joint statements with these organizations.

### **Working with the IFLA membership**

Open access is a central pillar of IFLA's Strategic Plan 2010-2015 in which a whole-of-organisation approach is taken to integrating the issue into IFLA's current and proposed activities.

IFLA will advise its member associations in regard to:

- promoting open access in national policies;
- stimulating library members to promote open access in their communities and to implement measures to enlarge the impact of open access;
- enriching the local and national information infrastructure in order to stimulate open access;
- assistance in the work for national policies regarding open access to knowledge, as well as to publicly funded research and cultural heritage;
- supporting organizations, programmes, initiatives and services that are working for the promotion of open access.

Together with partners as SPARC, EIFL and LIBER, IFLA will also provide its member associations with advocacy material and practical guidelines in line with the recommendations.

### **IFLA's publications will be open access**

IFLA will develop a transition plan that specifies the steps to be taken to transform IFLA's publications into open access.

**Endorsed by IFLA Governing Board, 18 April 2011**

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<sup>i</sup> A resolution to the IFLA General Assembly on August 14, 2010, called on IFLA to clarify its position on open access and to develop a strategy for action. This task was commissioned to the President's Working Group for Open Access by the Professional Board.

ii **“Definition of an Open Access Contribution**

Establishing open access as a worthwhile procedure ideally requires the active commitment of each and every individual producer of scientific knowledge and holder of cultural heritage. Open access contributions include original scientific research results, raw data and metadata, source materials, digital representations of pictorial and graphical materials and scholarly multimedia material.

Open access contributions must satisfy two conditions:

1. The author(s) and right holder(s) of such contributions grant(s) to all users a free, irrevocable, worldwide, right of access to, and a license to copy, use, distribute, transmit and display the work publicly and to make and distribute derivative works, in any digital medium for any responsible purpose, subject to proper attribution of authorship (community standards, will continue to provide the mechanism for enforcement of proper attribution and responsible use of the published work, as they do now), as well as the right to make small numbers of printed copies for their personal use.
2. A complete version of the work and all supplemental materials, including a copy of the permission as stated above, in an appropriate standard electronic format is deposited (and thus published) in at least one online repository using suitable technical standards (such as the Open Archive definitions) that is supported and maintained by an academic institution, scholarly society, government agency, or other well-established organization that seeks to enable open access, unrestricted distribution, inter operability, and long-term archiving.”