IFLA Strategy Surveys
Survey 2 – Experience of Working with the IFLA Strategy

The second of our four surveys designed to help the Governing Board prepare for its discussions about next steps on the IFLA Strategy focuses on the content of the current (2019-2024) edition. It aimed to complement the first (looking at how people had used the Strategy), and understand how far people felt that the current text was relevant, informative, inspiring and guiding – four key roles of a Strategy.

This document shares information about the methodology and respondents, and then provides analysis of the quantitative data, looking first at overall results, then results by region, type of respondent, and question. In each case, questions for the Governing Board to consider are highlighted.

In addition, a summary of answers to the open-ended textual questions on the most and least useful aspects of the Strategy is provided in annex.

1. Methodology

Based on questions also shared at a special session at the World Library and Information Congress, it asked how far participants agreed with the following statements, using a Likert scale. The shorthand used for each of these follows the full statement

- IFLA's Vision and Mission are relevant (Vision Relevant)
- IFLA's Vision and Mission inform me about IFLA's work (Vision Informative)
- IFLA's Vision and Mission inspire me to engage in IFLA's work (Vision Inspiring)
- IFLA’s Vision and Mission guide me in my engagement with IFLA (Vision Guiding)
- IFLA’s Strategic Directions are relevant (SDs Relevant)
- IFLA’s Strategic Directions inform me about IFLA’s work (SDs Informative)
- IFLA’s Strategic Directions inspire me to engage in IFLA’s work (SDs Inspiring)
- IFLA’s Strategic Directions guide me in my engagement with IFLA (SDs Guiding)

We also asked open questions about which elements of the IFLA Strategy were most and least useful, and for contextual data around the region from which they were answering, and the way in which respondents primarily engaged with IFLA.
There were 234 responses to the second survey, lower than those received in the first. In terms of respondents by region (see Graph 1a), Europe again came top with almost a third of responses in total, with Asia-Oceania and North America almost tied at just over 23%. Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa all came in with between 6.4% and 8.1% of the total votes. Overall, this represents a slightly lower share of votes for Europe and North America than last time.

As for responses by respondent type (Graph 1b), the majority came from people identifying as IFLA volunteers (over 56%), with most of the rest being people primarily describing themselves as IFLA members (41.5%). Those who simply follow IFLA without having a particular link, or those who have no link at all represent barely 2% in total, and answers for them are not subsequently provided.

A full overview of the breakdown of responses by region and respondent type is given in Table 1 below.
Table 1: Respondents by region and type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>I volunteer on an IFLA committee/unit</th>
<th>I am an IFLA member/affiliate</th>
<th>I follow IFLA’s work without having any particular link</th>
<th>I have no link with IFLA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia-Oceania</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Overall Responses

We can look at the data in different ways overall. First of all, by allocating numbers to the responses (from 5 for strongly agree, and 1 for strongly disagree), we can work out averages across the board. Graph 2a does this for the data as a whole.

In short, this underlines that the most positive responses concern the broad sense of relevance of IFLA’s Vision and Mission and Strategic Direction, with average responses between agree and strongly agree. There is a notable drop-off as we get to questions around whether these inform people about IFLA and what it does, inspires them, and guides them. Indeed, on the question of whether the Vision and Mission inspire and guide, and whether the Strategic Directions inform, inspire and guide, the average response was between ‘agree’ and ‘neither agree nor disagree.

Graph 2b presents the same data, but pairing up responses for the vision and mission, and the Strategic Directions. On statements about whether these are relevant, informative or inspiring, the Vision and Mission score higher on average. It is only on the question of guiding that the Strategic Directions (SDs) receive a higher score than the Vision and Mission. This is perhaps normal – the SDs are indeed supposed to be the elements that guide work practically towards the Vision and Mission, but arguably should also be informative.
Graphs 2c and 2d offer an alternative look, exploring the share of respondents who (strongly) agreed or (strongly) disagreed with each of the statements. These offer a relatively similar overview, of the overall trend (declining levels of agreement through the questions, from high agreement (at or over 80%) that the Vision, Mission and SDs are relevant and informative, but then a somewhat less with the idea that they are inspiring or guiding.

The highest levels of disagreement were with whether the Vision and Mission are guiding – almost 10% of respondents. These figures are nonetheless quite low, although imply that there is also a reasonable amount of indifference.

**Questions for the Governing Board:**

1. Should we be concerned that scores for the Vision, Mission and SDs on being inspiring and guiding are that much lower than those for being relevant?
2. Do the lower scores in general for the Strategic Directions indicate a need for change?
3. Does the overall positivity of the scores imply anything for how far the Strategy as a whole needs to change?

3. Responses by Region

Graphs 3a to 3f set out the average responses for each region in turn.

Graphs 3a to 3f illustrate the average responses for each region in turn. These underline that the trend of people finding the Vision, Mission and SDs more relevant, and progressively less positive answers when it comes to being informative, inspirational and guiding is most clearly replicated in Europe and North America,
which together represent over half of the responses. In other regions, the picture is different.

Looking at the Vision and Mission, these clearly score highest for being relevant in Asia-Oceania, and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), but this aspect stands out less in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). In LAC and MENA, the role of the Vision and Mission in guiding people is relatively strong compared to its role elsewhere.

As for the Strategic Directions (SDs), again, the pattern of generally lower scores is seen in Europe and North America, but the difference is less stark in other regions, and indeed, MENA respondents tended to see the SDGs as being more relevant, informative, inspirational and guiding than the Vision and Mission.

Questions for the Governing Board:

4. *Does it matter that there are quite different profiles, in particular in terms of informing, inspiring and guiding action, between regions?*

5. *How can we take account of potentially different regional needs from a Strategy?*

4. Responses by Respondent Type

Graphs 4a and 4b show the results for the main two categories of respondents – Volunteers and Members, again showing average scores.

As highlighted in overall results, the pattern here is the same – in the case of both the Vision and Mission, and the Strategic Directions, agreement is progressively less strong as we go from questions around relevance to information, to inspiration, to guidance. The difference between these is, however, much sharper when it comes to responses from members, especially around the Vision and Mission.

IFLA did emphasise, in its promotion of the Strategy, the desire that this should help to inspire and structure action not just among volunteers, but also among Members. The results point to a relative measure of success among volunteers, but more work needed among Members (while noting that the average scores are of course still positive – i.e. respondents tended to agree with the statements).
Questions for the Governing Board:

6. Should we be concerned at the scores for how far the Strategy has inspired and guided action amongst volunteers? If so, what can we do about it?

7. Should we be concerned that the SDs seem to get higher scores on all counts among members than amongst volunteers? If so, is there anything we can do about it?

5. Responses by Question

This section provides answers broken down by region and respondent type, with one graph per statement. The results for IFLA’s Vision and Mission are given in Graphs 5a to 5d.

Looking at regional differences here, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) consistently has the highest levels of agreement, with Asia-Oceania, LAC and MENA on relatively similar scores on most statements, a little further behind. In general, Europe and North America have lower levels of agreement on whether the Vision is inspiring, and whether it is guiding, but have similar levels of agreement as to whether it is relevant and informative.
As for the types of respondent, volunteers tended to have higher levels of agreement in general, although volunteers and members agreed to the same extent that the Vision and Mission were informative.

The question has already been raised about whether there may be different regional needs from a strategy – in particular given that the practice of developing plans and strategies will vary, and that there may be cultural factors in play in determining the role that this sort of document plays in people’s lives.

Questions for the Governing Board

8. Should we be concerned about the lower scores for the Vision and Mission being Inspiring and Guiding in Europe and North America, and if so, is there anything we can do about it?

9. Should we be concerned that the Vision and Mission in particular appear to get significantly lower scores for inspiring and guiding the work of members, and is there anything we can do about it?

The next four graphs provide the answers for the Strategic Directions (SDs) (Graphs 5e-5h)
As with IFLA’s Vision and Mission, Sub-Saharan African respondents tended to agree most strongly with the statements, with those from the MENA region following, then Latin America and the Caribbean (in all cases except for the SDs providing guidance), and then Asia-Oceania. Europe and North America have the lowest average level of agreement. While the gap between these two and the rest is not so wide as concerns whether they see the SDs as relevant and perhaps how informative they are, it is bigger when it comes to the power of the SDs to inspire and guide.

As for the result for volunteers and members, levels of agreement tend to be slightly higher for members than for volunteers, although it is worth noting that when it comes to the SDs informing, inspiring and guiding, average scores are between 3 and 4 (agree and neither agree nor disagree).

Questions for the Governing Board

10. Should we be concerned about the lower levels of agreement with statements concerning the Strategic Directions among European and North American respondents—especially as concerns inspiration and guidance—and if so, is there anything we can do about it?

11. Should we take anything from the relatively low levels of agreement with the idea that the SDs provide guidance and inspiration to volunteers, despite their key role in delivering IFLA work?

6. Summary of Questions

1. Should we be concerned that scores for the Vision, Mission and SDs on being inspiring and guiding are that much lower than those for being relevant?

2. Do the lower scores in general for the Strategic Directions indicate a need for change?

3. Does the overall positivity of the scores imply anything for how far the Strategy as a whole needs to change?

4. Does it matter that there are quite different profiles, in particular in terms of informing, inspiring and guiding action, between regions?

5. How can we take account of potentially different regional needs from a Strategy?

6. Should we be concerned at the scores for how far the Strategy has inspired and guided action amongst volunteers? If so, what can we do about it?

7. Should we be concerned that the SDs seem to get higher scores on all counts among members than amongst volunteers? If so, is there anything we can do about it?

8. Should we be concerned about the lower scores for the Vision and Mission being Inspiring and Guiding in Europe and North America, and if so, is there anything we can do about it?

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11. Should we take anything from the relatively low levels of agreement with the idea that the SDs provide guidance and inspiration to volunteers, despite their key role in delivering IFLA work?
ANNEX – Most and Least Useful Points in the Current Strategy

In addition to the checkbox questions, we also asked respondents to indicate particular strong and weak points in the current Strategy, in addition to their feedback about how informative, inspiring and guiding IFLA’s Vision, Mission and Strategic Directions are. Respondents were allowed to respond in free text. This section provides an overview of what was said. Around 2/3 of respondents shared ideas, although a number simply said ‘none’, or repeated answers in both questions.

Strong points

The following themes emerged as positive points about the Strategy:

The fact itself of having a global strategy: around 20 respondents indicated that they were happy to have a strategy that attempted to cross borders and parts of the sector, in particular those which risked otherwise being left behind or neglected. The importance of regional inclusion was highlighted by some respondents. It was seen as a positive that it gave a sense of connection to shared global challenges, without losing the sense of local relevance. Others noted the idea that the global nature of the strategy helped establish relationships with sister organisations and sectors.

The Strategy as an inspiration for change: in addition to general comments, respondents underlined how the Strategy had helped them to advance key themes nationally, including around the importance of universal and equitable access to information, innovation, and social responsibility. Some noted how the strategy had helped create a sense of direction in the field, as well as a focus on the future, and a desire to engage in association work in general. One respondent noted that the Strategy had offered a way of explaining to national association colleagues why it was important to be part of the global field, and another saw it as having been useful in explaining IFLA.

The Vision: 12 respondents highlighted that they liked the vision, with three of them liking the reference to informed and participatory societies, and one suggesting that it was powerful to have an idea of what the world would look like in the future.

Strategic Direction 1: 31 respondents found Strategic Direction 1 most useful. In addition to general support, respondents liked the reference to trying to address challenges expressed on the ground, building a presence with international organisations, work around intellectual freedom,. 5 responses highlighted in particular the SDGs.

Strategic Direction 2: 9 respondents referred to this, with one highlighting in particular the Library Map of the World.

Strategic Direction 3: 21 respondents referred to this Strategic Direction, with specific responses focusing on the value of references to challenging behaviours, wider networking, building strong national and regional library fields, and in person meetings where possible.
**Strategic Direction 4:** 5 respondents talked about this, with specific responses welcoming the emphasis on communications, and on working to develop a new membership strategy that promotes diversity and engagement.

**The process:** 4 people talked about how much they valued the process leading to the creation of the strategy, with one in particular arguing that it had helped with alignment of sections.

**Structuring role:** 15 respondents suggested that the Strategy had been helpful in structuring IFLA’s work, both for units, for IFLA’s work in general, and for the wider field. It was suggested that it was easy to align with the Strategy, and that it had been used to structure work within other associations. Two respondents highlighted the value of the key initiatives as a way of breaking down activities.

**Other:** 5 respondents welcomed the clarity of the strategy in general, while others welcomed its comprehensiveness, and its wider language. More specifically, people talked about activities under the Strategy, such as recent work on AI and the monthly newsletter.

**Weak points**

Issues highlighted as least useful in the feedback included:

**Not inspiring:** 20 people suggested that they didn’t find the Strategy inspiring, or did not provide a clear path towards involvement with IFLA. In particular, some felt that there was a lack of connection between vision and actions or opportunities to engage. Others felt that it was too broad or high level to be meaningful, while three people said that the structure (and number of initiatives) as a whole was distracting.

**Implementation failings:** 12 commented on concerns about a lack of implementation of the Strategy, with particular concerns about the lack of metrics, as well as around how and whether units were supporting the Strategic Directions

**Strategic Direction 1:** 13 respondents mentioned this, with just under half citing concerns about Dubai and arguing that IFLA had not lived up to its ideals. Individual respondents also mentioned concern about too much focus on the SDGs and not enough on Open Access, as well as calling for more materials. One respondent was unclear if IFLA was carrying out advocacy activities.

**Strategic Direction 2:** 4 respondents mentioned this, with one suggesting replacing the word ‘inspire’ with ‘listen’, and another suggesting that it was not IFLA’s job to be providing tools and infrastructures.

**Strategic Direction 3:** 9 respondents highlighted this direction, with concern in particular about events being inaccessible because of cost, or not being necessary because of technology. One person suggested that more was necessary on training.

**Strategic Direction 4:** 29 respondents referenced this Strategic Direction. Specific answers highlighted concern about the actions of the Governing Board, and about whether members were being listened to or given an opportunity to participate. One talked about a lack of transparency, and 2 about a lack of delivery, while 3 thought it
wasn’t clear. Finally, one person suggested that optimising the organisation might not belong as a Strategic Direction, and another that this was not relevant, in particular, for external partners.

**Not relevant for all regions:** 7 respondents highlighted worries about the costs involved in participating in IFLA, and a concern that people from richer countries were better placed to benefit from opportunities, as well as that not enough had been done to regionalise IFLA’s actions.

**Specific points:** beyond the above, additional criticisms included too much focus on libraries and not librarians, and too little on cultural heritage, indigenous peoples, equity, diversity and inclusion, cultural diversity, the role of librarians in communities, or how we can work through libraries to reach out to countries which are otherwise controversial. Finally, some felt that it was too inward facing, wanted to talk about empowering rather than enabling, or should look at falling library use in some countries.