



Intervention by IFLA: International Federation of Library Associations and Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) Diplomatic Conference June 17-28, 2013

Thank you Mr. President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen for inviting us to intervene.

IFLA, The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, representing libraries from more than 150 nations, and Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) are pleased to be speaking here today at the Diplomatic Conference convened to conclude a Treaty on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities. This is an historic occasion and we have high expectations of the outcome. The global library community asks Member States to ensure that we return home with a treaty that is effective.

An effective treaty recognizes the role and experience of libraries in providing access to accessible format works. Libraries serve all members of their communities and are mandated to provide equal access to information irrespective of format. Libraries are one of the key distributors of alternate format materials, hold positions of trust with users and rightsholders and are authorized entities in practice.

An effective treaty ensures efficient cross-border transfer of works. Libraries have a long tradition of managing the supply of materials on a non-commercial basis to users, between institutions and, where permitted, across borders. The procedures should be smooth, and should not hamper access through “commercial availability” conditions or unworkable “due diligence” procedures.

An effective treaty upholds the right to read for the world’s print disabled people – regardless of format. It cannot allow the application of a digital lock to prevent access for visually impaired or print disabled people. An electronic switch must not be allowed to trump the fundamental right to read.

Finally, Mr President, an effective treaty promotes the public interest as central to the balance in copyright law. The three-step test in international law is intended to balance the rights of creators alongside the public interest in access to works. A treaty for print disabled people must not be used to expand the reach of the three-step test.

We in the library profession recognize the financial barriers and limits of local capacity that exist to make works accessible. We know that the single most effective way to alleviate the book famine is to address the legal barriers to making works accessible worldwide. Libraries are one of the main agents delivering reading materials and information services for visually impaired and print disabled people and as libraries we are very familiar with the impediments. The Treaty must be fit for purpose - to deliver books and information to people who are blind or print disabled.

Library representatives are here and available to assist delegates during the conference. The outcome of this Diplomatic Conference is very important to libraries. May you be resolute in your purpose and successful in your deliberations. Thank you.

Contacts:

Victoria Owen owen@utsc.utoronto.ca

Winston Tabb wtabb@jhu.edu

Teresa Hackett teresa.hackett@eifl.net