United Kingdom

Responding institution:
Charted Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)

The United Kingdom is responding to the World Report for the third time, having previously contributed in 2001 and 2005. (A response was submitted in 2003, but unfortunately it arrived too late to be included in the report for that year.)

The 2007 response refers to an estimated 4 549 public library service points and 2 823 research libraries. The latter figure includes 167 university research libraries, 2 058 secondary school libraries and 598 government-funded research libraries. (The previous report referred to 4 624 public library service points and 860 libraries in universities and higher education institutions. The discrepancy between the estimates may be due to different interpretations of university and higher education institutions.)

According to Internet World Stats, Internet penetration for the UK in September 2006 was estimated at 62.3% (the reported penetration for 2005 was higher, at 69%).

Following the 11 September 2001 terrorism attacks, anti-terror legislation in the form of the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act of 2001 (ATCSA) was adopted in the UK. The 2005 report referred to the effects of such legislation which, although felt by the UK, at the time did not affect libraries directly. Concern was also expressed about the freedom of access to information on the Internet. The 2007 response slightly expands on the previous report. Additional concerns have also been noted from third-party resources, as will be pointed out.

Although no specific violations of intellectual freedom have been reported by the respondent, such violations are noted by third-party sources, as will be explained below.

Internet access in all library types is considered very healthy at between 81-100%. University and school libraries, as well as the large majority of public libraries, offer free access to the Internet: "Access to the Internet is still free of charge in the large majority of public library services, but unlike the use of printed material, there is no statutory entitlement for free access to the Internet. The original investment in the People's Network, which provided access to the Internet in every public library in the UK, was funded by the National Lottery. However, the investment is now approaching 5+ years old and library authorities are having to look at replacing equipment without the support of the Lottery. It is feared more will start to charge for the service." According to the respondent, the state and other library authorities have to some extent made extra funding available: "Public money is used to invest in most of the major networks – the Higher Education Funding Council invests in JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) and the JANET (Joint Academic Network) system; the National Health Service invests in the Connecting for Health network including NHS Direct, NHS Choices and the National Library for Health. More modest sums are made available centrally to the People's Network through the

Framework for the Future programme for public libraries, but as public libraries are part of local government most of their funding comes from the public purse anyway, including whatever each authority invests in library ICT [information and communication technology]. It should also be understood that in most cases library matters are 'devolved' to the four home nations – Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England (although in practice English matters are dealt with in the UK Parliament at Westminster) – and therefore programmes will differ across the four nations."

There is extensive coverage of local content on the Internet, but average coverage of local languages. (One has to assume for the latter that this refers to local languages other than English.)

The literacy rate is estimated at 99%. It has, however, been pointed out that the Moser Report (*A fresh start: Improving literacy and numeracy* by the Department for Education, 1999) reported that 20% of adults were functionally illiterate (i.e. with a reading age of 11 or below).

The library association (CILIP) is to a certain degree in favour of filtering information on library Internet terminals, and to a certain extent the use of filtering software is widespread in the country. The protection of children is offered as a reason. According to the respondent, the library often gets caught in the general filtering policy of its parent institution. As a result a number of public libraries, for instance, have systems that operate with the same filtering as do the networks used by staff in council departments. The respondent feels this is clearly more restrictive than should be the case for a public service. (In the 2005 report, CILIP still had to take a stance on the issue of filtering whereas, contrary to the 2003 report, the use of filtering software in the country's libraries was reported as widespread.)

The adoption of the anti-terror legislation was already reported in 2005. It is felt that such legislation is likely to impact on user privacy and that the keeping of user records would probably harm the freedom of expression of individual Internet library users.

Regarding areas of special focus, the respondent has remarked that it is difficult to indicate whether libraries in the UK have been involved in any programmes promoting HIV/Aids awareness. It is also not aware of programmes to provide HIV/Aids information to members of the community who are unable to read. (This is somewhat in contrast to the detailed activities reported for 2005.) Libraries in the UK have been involved in initiatives designed to promote women's literacy or their access to social information and information on the economy, education, health and family planning.

The respondent has indicated that CILIP adopted a code of ethics in 2004, but not the Internet Manifesto or the Glasgow Declaration. This is, however, in contrast to the 2005 response reporting that both the Internet Manifesto and the Glasgow Declaration had been adopted in the UK.

User privacy and anti-terror legislation

The respondent is of the opinion that the anti-terror legislation is likely to impact on user privacy. The most recent anti-terror legislation in the UK has been the Terrorism Act of 2006. The Act makes it an offence to disseminate a publication encouraging terrorism. Potentially it could put many librarians at risk of breaking the law (and risking imprisonment).

According to the respondent a "libraries lobby" has, however, managed to get the concept of "intent" added to the statute, so that library staff in the UK would have to be shown to have intended to encourage terrorism by disseminating a publication. The Act can be found at http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga_20060011_en.pdf.

CILIP has also commissioned a legal opinion on the rights of police and other security agencies to access user records in UK libraries. The respondent is of the opinion that extensive powers already exist, which are probably not well understood by library users in the UK. Although the respondent is not aware of any evidence that users have been deterred from using libraries as a result of the anti-terror legislation, it is aware that the police have approached library staff for user information on a number of occasions. According to the respondent, more specific detail is not available as such incidents often go unreported.

It is felt that the keeping of records affects the freedom of expression of the individual library Internet user. As the police or other agencies could demand to see library records, this could compromise users' privacy and might inhibit further use of the facility by the user. In order to avoid "fishing expeditions" by the police or other agencies, CILIP advises its members to ensure that all requests by the police or others are appropriately made, as there are limitations and checks built into the legislation regarding the exercise of their rights to obtain such information.

Reported incidents/violations of intellectual freedom in the past two years

According to the respondent, no incidents of the

violation of intellectual freedom have been reported over the last two years, although there have been some incidents in the past ten years. A number of such incidents were reported in 2005, and over the past two years a number of incidents were also noted by third-party resources.

According to an Amnesty International report (http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/gbr-summary-eng), the UK government continues to erode fundamental human rights, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary. This includes persisting attempts to undermine the ban on torture at home and abroad, and by enacting and seeking to enact legislation inconsistent with domestic and international human rights law.

Following the bomb attacks on the London transport system in July 2005, measures to counter terrorism led to serious human rights violations, and concern was widespread about the impact of these measures on Muslims and other minority communities. New concerns were also raised about past killings in Northern Ireland and proposed legislation that would impact on past human rights abuses in that country.

Concern has been expressed especially about anti-terrorism measures and the persecution of people whom the government labelled as "suspected international terrorists". In March the government imposed "control orders" on people interned under the previous legislation, subjecting them to severe restrictions and violating their human rights. Control orders were later imposed on other people, including at least one UK national. In June the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) published a report on its March 2004 visit, which does not reflect favourably on the UK situation. In June, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe published a report of his November 2004 visit. In it, he expressed concern about the admission, as evidence, of information obtained through torture in judicial proceedings; prison conditions; the treatment of asylum-seekers; the low age of criminal responsibility; discrimination; and the need to set up public inquiries capable of establishing the full circumstances surrounding cases of alleged state collusion in killings in Northern Ireland (http://thereport.amnesty.org/page/1044/eng/).

Incidents of detaining people include reports on Jane Laporte for anti-war protestation (http://www.ifex.org/fr/content/view/full/80532/). Concerns about the violation of the rights of journalists and inadequate protection for them have also been reported (http://www.ifex.org/fr/content/view/full/79087/; http://

www.ifex.org/fr/content/view/full/77461/), as well as concerns about censorship in Northern Ireland (http://www.indexonline.org/en/news/articles/2007/2/northern-ireland-censorship-complementing-co.shtml) and the retainment of phone and Internet data on citizens (http://www.indexonline.org/en/indexindex/articles/2006/3/europe-court-challenge-to-data-retention-law.shtml).

HIV/Aids awareness

The respondent has remarked that it is difficult to indicate whether libraries in the UK have been involved in promoting HIV/Aids awareness, or women's access to information or women's literacy in any way. There have been no national programmes involving libraries, but many library authorities may well have undertaken local campaigns. The respondent believes that virtually all libraries will have referral information to key bodies such as the Terence Higgins Trust. The respondent is also not aware of initiatives to provide HIV/Aids information to members of the community who are unable to read. (This may be due to the high literacy rate of 99% estimated for the UK.)

The 2007 response is somewhat contrary to the 2005 response, indicating that libraries in the UK have been quite involved in raising awareness of HIV/Aids, providing translations of relevant materials in ethnic languages and going as far as forming partnerships with health libraries in developing countries in order to lend support.

Women and freedom of access to information

Libraries in the UK have offered special programmes focusing on the promotion of women's literacy. Some libraries feature this as part of their outreach work on literacy. However, no specific national campaign exists. Libraries also have special programmes focusing on promoting women's access to social information and information on the economy, education, health and family planning. Although there is no overarching national campaign, a number of authorities may focus on women in such activities. Such programmes may, for example, include work with women who are single parents, refugees or members of minority communities.

Recently the equalities legislation has been extended in the UK and all public bodies now have a duty to promote "gender equality" in their services and employment, rather than simply avoiding discrimination. According to the respondent, it is a little early to say how this legislation will impact on library services.

IFLA Internet Manifesto and IFLA Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom

CILIP has not adopted the IFLA Internet Manifesto or the Glasgow Declaration. The respondent explains: "We are looking at our policy generally within the concept of the Information Society. This clearly falls within those parameters and it is probable that we will consider the Internet Manifesto and the Glasgow Declaration as part of this policy review" (i.e. the review of the ethics codes which, according to the respondent, address a similar viewpoint).

CILIP has a statement on intellectual freedom, access to information and censorship agreed in 2005 that can be considered similar to the IFLA principles. CILIP also endorsed the Council of Europe Guidelines on Public Access and Freedom of Expression in Networked Information. These CILIP statements can be found at http://www.cilip.org.uk/professionalguidance/foi/intellfreedom.htm. According to the respondent, these might, however, be revisited in 2008.

Ethics

CILIP adopted a code of ethics in 2004 (see www.infoethics.org.uk/CILIP/admin/index.htm) in the form of the Ethical Principles and the Code of Professional Practice. These are aimed at the individual rather than the institution. According to the respondent it is, however, likely that, following a proposed revision to the governance articles of CILIP, institutional members will become covered by CILIP's disciplinary procedure. A review of ethics in relation to institutions may therefore be necessary in 2008.

CILIP has recently launched a website to support members in ethical issues, and an ethics panel is available to give confidential advice to members. The website (http://www.infoethics.org.uk/CILIP/admin/index.htm) contains numerous case studies.

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Main indicators

Country name:	United Kingdom
Population:	60 776 238 (July 2007 est.)
Main language:	English, Welsh (about 26% in Wales), Scottish form of Gaelic (about 60 000 in Scotland)
Literacy:	99%
Literacy reported by respondent:	99%

Population figures, language and literacy are from the
CIA World Factbook, 2007 edition
(https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html).

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Libraries and Internet access

The United Kingdom contributed to the World Report series in 2005 and 2001. The following section compares data and answers from 2007 with the 2005 IFLA/FAIFE World Report and adds context from the respondent's estimates, where possible.

Library services

Estimated number of public libraries*:	4 549 (2005: 4 624)
Estimated number of school libraries:	ca 2 058 (secondary schools)
Estimated number of university libraries:	167
Estimated number of government-funded research libraries:	ca 598
Source of these numbers:	Library and Information Statistics Unit, Loughborough University; CILIP; "Guide to libraries & information services in government departments and other organisations", comp. Dale & Wilson. British Library, 2004

Internet access

Population online**:	37 600 000 Internet users in Sept. 2006 (62.3%) (2005: 69%)
Percentage of public libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100% (2005: 81-100%)
Percentage of school libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100%
Percentage of university libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100%
Percentage of government-funded research libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100%
In your estimate, how much local content*** is available on the Internet:	Very much
To what degree is content on the Internet available in local languages:	Average
Is the library association in favour of filtering information on library Internet terminals:	Yes, to a certain degree (2005: CILIP is not yet decided on its position – a national policy is under consideration, but there is a wide spectrum of opinion in the UK library profession)
Is the use of filtering software widespread in your country's libraries:	Yes, to a certain degree – for the protection of children (2005: Yes, motivated by the desire to protect children and safeguard public morality)
Is it free of charge for library users to access the Internet on library computers:	Yes, in university and school libraries, as well as the large majority of public libraries (2005: No)
Has the state or other library authorities made any extra funding available for Internet access in the library system of your country in the last two years:	Yes – public money is used to invest in most of the major networks (2005: No)

* Public library service points, including branch libraries.
** Online population numbers are from Internet World Stats (www.internetworldstats.com).
*** Local content is defined as content that originates in the country.