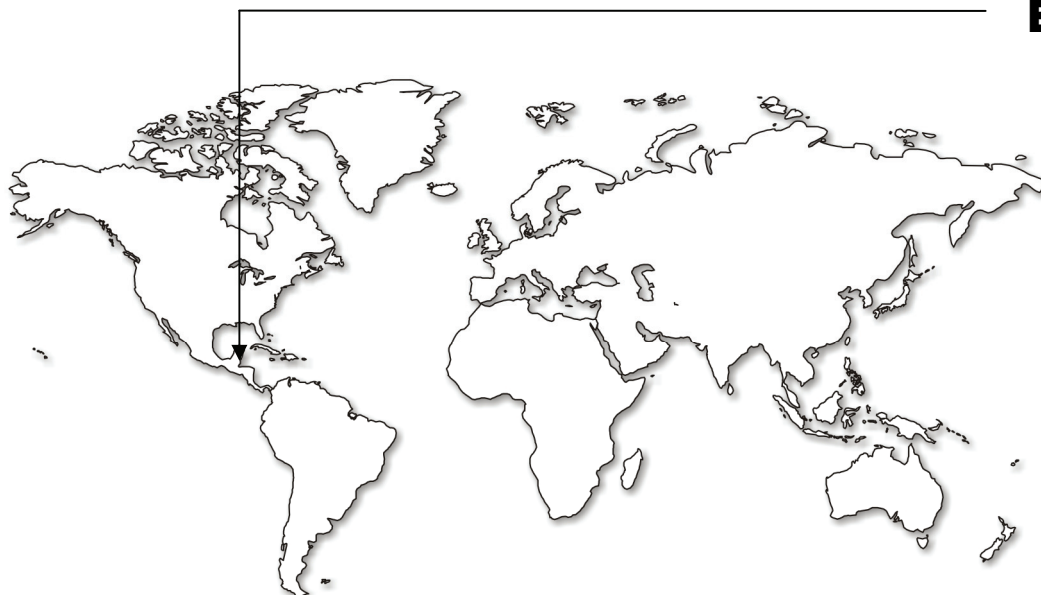# Belize

Responding institution:
Belize National Library Service (BNLS)

Belize is responding to the World Report for the second time: it responded in 2003, but not 2005. There are an estimated 34 public library service points and 51 research libraries (including 3 university research libraries and 48 school libraries) in Belize. No data for government-funded research libraries has been given.

Internet penetration for the country is estimated at 12.2% (*CIA World Factbook,* 2007 edition). Although levels of Internet access in Belize are good in some library sectors, it does not apply to all, with 81-100% access for public libraries and university libraries, 41-60% for school libraries and less than 20% for government-funded research libraries (earlier in the report it is, however, indicated that there are no government-funded research libraries). There is very little local content, as well as very little coverage of local languages on the Internet. The respondent estimates the literacy rate in Belize at 76%. (This is very close to the 76.9% in the 2007 *CIA World Factbook*.)

Access to the Internet is not free of charge for library users. Public libraries have Internet cafés for which there is an hourly charge. University libraries charge computer costs within tuition fees. In some cases, the state has made attempts to provide computers in schools.

The library association of Belize is to a certain extent in favour of filtering information on library Internet terminals, but the use of filtering software is not widespread in the country's libraries. (From comments elsewhere in the response there appears to be no active library association.)

There have been incidents that adversely affect freedom of access to information. The respondent expands on one such incident (see below). No anti-terror legislation has been passed that might negatively impact on library users.

Regarding other areas of special focus, libraries in Belize have been involved in programmes for promoting HIV/Aids awareness and for providing HIV/Aids information to members of the community unable to read. They do not, however, have special programmes focusing on the promotion of women's literacy or women's access to specific topics (e.g. social information, the economy, education, health and family planning).

The respondent has indicated that a code of ethics has not been adopted. As there is no library association, neither the IFLA Internet Manifesto nor the Glasgow Declaration has been adopted.

User privacy and anti-terror legislation
No anti-terror legislation has been passed in Belize that would adversely affect the intellectual freedom of library users. The respondent has indicated that if such legislation were to be passed, it would impact on users' privacy, because users are already accustomed to operating the Internet without restrictions. Keeping user records affects the freedom of expression of the individual Internet library user, because it will infringe on privacy, which is regarded as precious.

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

There have been reported violations of intellectual freedom. The respondent refers to one such incident. Although Belize has a Freedom of Information Act, the government was recently called upon to release a guarantee it had (secretly) entered into with a commercial bank. According to the respondent, this normally should not have been a privileged document and even the library should have been able to access a copy.

HIV/Aids awareness

Libraries have been involved in programmes promoting HIV/Aids awareness. The Belize National Library Service is planning a project to partner with the National Aids Commission to provide information to rural libraries via a mobile library service. The mobile service would provide audiovisual materials to rural communities and to members of the community who are unable to read.

Women and freedom of access to information

Libraries in Belize do not offer special programmes focusing specifically on women's literacy or promoting women's access to information on topics such as social information, the economy, education, health and family planning. This is due to affordability problems with providing relevant content.

IFLA Internet Manifesto

As it was problematic to revive a library association, the IFLA Internet Manifesto has not been adopted and it is not the intent to do so within the next two years.

IFLA Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom

As it was problematic to revive a library association, the IFLA Glasgow Declaration has not been adopted. The respondent has indicated that it is not the intent to adopt the Declaration within the next two years.

Ethics

As it was problematic to revive a library association over the years, a code of ethics has not been adopted. It would only be possible to consider this over the next two years if a library association can be sustained.

Main indicators

Country name:	Belize
Population:	294 385 (July 2007 est.)
Main language:	Spanish 46%, Creole 32.9%, Mayan dialects 8.9%, English 3.9% (official), Garifuna 3.4% (Caribbean), German 3.3%, other 1.4%, unknown 0.2% (2000 census)
Literacy:	76.9%
Literacy reported by respondent:	76%

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

Belize

Libraries and Internet access

Belize contributed to the World Report series in 2003. The following section compares data and answers from 2007 with the 2003 IFLA/FAIFE World Report and adds context from the respondent's estimates, where possible.

Library services

Estimated number of public libraries*:	34
Estimated number of school libraries:	48
Estimated number of university libraries:	3
Estimated number of government-funded research libraries:	No data provided
Source of these numbers:	Belize National Library Services (BNLS) management; Ministry of Education

Internet access

Population online**:	38 000 Internet users as of March 2007 (12.2%) (2003: 0.68%)
Percentage of public libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100% (2003: Less than 20%)
Percentage of school libraries offering Internet access to users:	41-60%
Percentage of university libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100%
Percentage of government-funded research libraries offering Internet access to users:	Less than 20%
In your estimate, how much local content*** is available on the Internet:	Very little
To what degree is content on the Internet available in local languages:	Very little
Is the library association in favour of filtering information on library Internet terminals:	Yes, to a certain degree (2003: Yes)
Is the use of filtering software widespread in your country's libraries:	No (2003: No)
Is it free of charge for library users to access the Internet on library computers:	No, public libraries have Internet cafés for which there is an hourly charge; university libraries charge computer costs within the tuition fees (2003: 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, in some cases – the state has made attempts to provide computers in schools

* 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.