

IFLA/IPA Steering Group

Joint Statement on Freedom of Expression

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the **International Publishers Association (IPA)** have for a long period of time promoted the right to freedom of expression in print and electronic environments.

Through the joint IFLA/IPA Steering Group, both organisations are now cooperating more intensively to ensure that the freedom of expression, and more particularly the freedom to publish, whether in the print or digital environments, be more effective.

IFLA and IPA would like to re-assert that:

- Freedom of expression is a fundamental right of the human being, in accordance with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Freedom of expression is the right of every individual both to hold and express opinions and to seek, impart and receive information, through any media, regardless of frontiers.
- The right to freedom of opinion and expression is at the basis of democracy and is of fundamental importance to the safeguarding of human dignity. The diversity of sources of knowledge and information is an essential prerequisite for cultural diversity, creativity, prosperity and the development of societies worldwide.
- Publishers, by distributing works of the mind, and librarians, by providing the access to the information and knowledge, play a central role in the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom and help to safeguard democratic values.
- In order for publishers and librarians to fully contribute to the advancing of science, knowledge and creativity, national legal frameworks in accordance with international instruments protecting the right to freedom of expression must be put into place.
- The basic principles of freedom of expression in accordance with Article 19 of the UDHR and ICCPR must continue to apply in the electronic environment. Global information networks facilitate the exchange of information throughout the world to the benefit of all. IPA and IFLA encourage governments to oppose any attempts to censor or inhibit the publication of, and access to, online information.
- The UNESCO Florence Agreement on the Importation of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Materials and its additional Nairobi Protocol, by fostering the free circulation of educational, scientific and cultural materials, facilitate the free flow of ideas and thus play a central role in the widest possible dissemination of the diverse forms of self-expression in societies. IFLA and IPA encourage the ratification and implementation of both instruments.
- IFLA and IPA will do their utmost to oppose steadfastly any attempt or threat to restrict the freedom of expression and more particularly the freedom to publish, whether in the print or digital environments.

Adopted by the IFLA/IPA Steering Group at its 8th meeting held in Glasgow on 22 August 2002

