



## Address by the President to the General Assembly

Honored Guests, IFLA Members and Colleagues,

I come before you today with both joy and a bit of sadness as this is my final opportunity to address you as your President. The last two years have probably been the most meaningful of my life and that is thanks to many people. It has been a joy to work with our Secretary General and the wonderful staff that includes veterans and an army of new staff all of whom have responded to the challenges of the last year. Will all staff make your selves known so we can show you how much we appreciate your efforts?

It has also been a pleasure to work with the IFLA Leadership, The Governing Board, a great group of Standing Committee chairs and members and of course the IFLA advisory committees. Not only do you take action all year long to identify issues, create solutions and lead the profession globally in your practice areas but what you plan for this conference continues to show the world how libraries are leading the way when it comes to transforming society. Thank you.

IFLA could not be successful by itself. We have a great network of strategic partners that continues to grow and these alliances are critical to our success. Many are longstanding and quite a few are newer. I want to extend a special welcome to the Public Library Association and TASCHA who are our legacy partners. We are so happy to be working together with you to unite the library field.

I am also very lucky to be surrounded I my life by some very supportive people who encouraged me every step of the way. It was the Library of Congress and my Director Dan Mulhollan who decided I would represent CRS and sent me to my first IFLA Congress 20 years ago. They continued their support past my retirement by hosting the North American Vision meeting earlier this year. I have many professional colleagues a number of whom are here and I must single out 1, Jane Dysart, whose unwavering support is deeply appreciated. Finally, I need to thank one person most of you have never met, my best friend Peter Waldron, who listens patiently, gives great advice, tells me “yes I can” when I need to hear that, and is my all around MVP, that is a sports term, most valuable player.

I am so so grateful to all of you.

The Trend Report and the Lyon declaration inspired me to envision a future where libraries are seen as critical assets in their communities and I use that word in the broadest sense. I knew what we could a potentially be together and I was pretty sure that all of you had that feeling too but time was running out. It was not enough to talk, we had to act so my theme became Libraries a call to action.

It has been two years since I stood before you and issued the call to action for the first time. I asked if you would take this journey with me and I was overjoyed when I heard your resounding yes's si's oui's and every other language affirming your commitment. While my expectations were high I never imagined that we would travel so far together so fast and I thank you deeply for what you are doing

Your response to the call to action has been magnificent. As president of IFLA it is important to me to bring the call to action to you directly. I was honored to be asked to speak at national meetings this year in China, Cuba, Mexico, the United States, Canada, Russia, Bulgaria, Poland and India. These visits allowed me to see amazing work to transform libraries all over the world, in many cases without an infusion of new monetary resources, and to personally meet and thank my colleagues in these countries who are unable to come to the IFLA Congress. I saw firsthand the importance of a strong library associations and their dedication to raising the profile of libraries in their countries and their efforts to help their members develop new skills and remain current in the practice of old ones. I thank them for their extraordinary work.

These trips made real for me the importance for IFLA to have a regional strategy that makes our presence real and operational in countries around the world. I also saw regionalism in action when I spoke at 2 meetings, the Association of Parliamentary Libraries of Asia and the Pacific and the Conference of Directors of National Libraries of Asia Oceana. Both of these meetings demonstrated great examples of the importance of regional cooperation and what good things happen when librarians work together on a regional basis. I realized that a regional strategy can also be employed successfully by some IFLA sections. Finally, I was put to work in many of the countries I visited. I met with Ministers and other decision makers to bring them the message that libraries are a critical part of the infrastructure that will help them to achieve their national goals.

You have been responding to the call at a national level as well. The launch of the Lyon declaration in 2014 began the campaign to position libraries and librarians to be critical players in working with governments to achieve the UN 2030 Sustainable development goals. As President-elect and President, I represented you at the United Nations and we successfully advocated for inclusion of the critical role that information plays towards achieving the SDGs and the recognition of libraries as a critical part of the infrastructure for achieving that goal or as I said in New York a few weeks ago, there is no truly sustainable development without access to information, and no meaningful, inclusive access to information without libraries. Last year I reminded you that it was now up to you to get libraries as part of the national development plan and you responded. The ball was passed to you and you took action. You attended the IFLA advocacy workshops where you planned your campaigns including awareness-raising activities and meetings with your policy makers to ensure libraries are recognized as key partners in supporting the United Nations 2030 Agenda I had the honor of keynoting a meeting in Sofia Bulgaria that is part of this program. 73 countries are now officially part of this effort and IFLA is supporting your efforts, collecting and publishing your stories in **booklet** of examples and recommendations for policymakers demonstrating the contribution of libraries to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Most recently I had the honor of launching the first of a series of reports, the Development and Access to Information, DA2I report at a reception during the United Nations High Political Forum which was attended by the Under Secretary general of the Un and high ranking representatives of several nations. I took their attendance as a positive sign that IFLA is making an impact. This report is the first of a series of annual reports that will monitor the progress countries are making towards fulfilling their commitment to promote meaningful access to information as part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It underlines the invaluable contribution that information access, particularly through libraries, makes to promoting more socially and economically inclusive societies., and it should provide you with great supporting facts and statistics for your discussions with policymakers. DA2I is a joint project between the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the Technology & Social Change Group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington Information School, one of our 2 legacy partners and I thank them.

This brings me to the most important call to action I will issue. It is one that extends far beyond my presidency.

Last year I reported on the progress with building the change agenda and told you what I had learned from the many visits to your library association meetings. I reported that I had seen amazing work going on all over the world but that it was work happening in isolation. I did promise that the best was yet to come.

Well this year we have made good on that promise. We are bold and are choosing to take a totally new direction, one which seeks to end the isolation and to unite us globally. What happened in Athens represents a major turning point in the effort to transform our libraries and ourselves.

The second President's meeting, Our Future of Change: Envisioning the Role of Libraries and the Information Community confirmed the sense of urgency that is required to address the issues created by societal trends, and the urgency with which we must address our tasks of charting a new course for our libraries and our profession. Once again, we heard how the pace of change continues to accelerate as new developments such as the applications of artificial intelligence proliferate. Speakers challenged us to change the way we think. Our key note speaker David Snowden advised strongly that "until you change the way you think about the past and the present, there is no future."

While the message of change was similar to that of the first President's meeting, thanks to the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation we now have the opportunity to craft a global response in a way that has never been done before. We have been given the opportunity to craft that common global vision that is so necessary to our success. The first vision workshops plus the six regional workshops that followed were only the beginning. So many of you took the message back to your countries, library associations and professional units and involved many many more of our community in this effort. I cannot thank you enough for your efforts to grow this movement. Your tweets, Facebook and Instagram postings and on-line vision webinars have brought so many new librarians to this conversation and you inspired me to work harder. But we are not done. At this Congress and the launch of the on-line platform our vision discussion has the potential to explode but we will not achieve this goal without you. You must act. We need you to reach out to others once again. There are still many of our colleagues whose voices must be heard and we need you to call them to action. We need you to get them engaged in this process.

Yes, you have answered the call to action in ways I could not have imagined when I first issued the call two years ago. The call is alive and well thanks to all of you. If I have accomplished anything during my two years as President it is because of you and your dedication to action. When you said yes to my questions two years ago it was not an idle response, you meant it and you followed through and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Our work continues and I have great expectations that Gloria Perez Salmeron will bring excellent new leadership to this effort and I am sure that you will give her the energy and commitment to action that you have so graciously given me.

It is with a bit of sadness that I step aside. It has been a wonderful experience thanks to all of you but I do so with great hope for the future because we are IFLA and we are strong and together we are creating the future.

I wish you all much success and happiness in all the years to come and once again, thank you for taking this journey with me.

**Donna Scheeder**

IFLA President 2015-2017