Oman

Responding institution:

The respondent has requested to remain anonymous.

This is the first response to the World Report from Oman. There are about 50 public libraries, 20 university and college libraries, 2 government-funded research libraries and 700 school libraries.

Internet access is uneven across the types of libraries, with 81-100% and 41-60% for universities and government-funded research libraries respectively, and less than 20% and 21-40% for public and school libraries respectively. There is not much local content on the Internet and very little content is available in local languages. The literacy rate is estimated at 70% (81.4% according to the 2007 *CIA World Factbook*).

Filtering software is found in the country's libraries, with a measure of support from the library association. Public morality, religious values and the protection of children are cited as reasons for using such software. Although library authorities have made some additional funding available for Internet access in the library system, access is not free of charge in public libraries.

In the respondent's view, anti-terror legislation passed in Oman is impacting on user privacy. There is also some indication of violation of intellectual freedom. One example is the government's refusal to allow the libraries to market their services and materials, on the grounds of self-promotion and the promotion of one religion over another. Another example is the prohibitive government bureaucracy in establishing a

new public library. Even support from the private sector for such an initiative cannot proceed without government permission.

The reasons given for libraries not being involved in HIV/Aids awareness programmes, and for not having programmes to facilitate access to information by women, are unawareness and the library's lack of capacity.

The library association of Oman was only established in March 2007 and, as a result, it has not yet considered the adoption of a code of ethics, the IFLA Internet Manifesto or the IFLA Glasgow Declaration.

User privacy and anti-terror legislation

Anti-terror legislation has been passed in Oman, which has led to some users declining to visit libraries. The respondent believes that this legislation will also affect user privacy and that keeping user records will impact on the individual's freedom of expression.

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

It is very difficult to start up a new library because of the government's regulations, and existing libraries are prevented from marketing their materials and services widely. Oman was ranked 155th out of 194 countries in the 2006 Table of Global Press Freedom Rankings (http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=271&year=2006).

HIV/Aids awareness

Libraries are not involved in programmes that raise

awareness of HIV/Aids and the respondent is uncertain why this is so.

Women and freedom of access to information

Libraries are not sufficiently equipped to provide special information programmes for women. This is unfortunate, as Amnesty International reported in 2007 that Omani laws and practices continue to discriminate against women in respect of their personal status, employment and participation in public life (http://thereport.amnesty.org/eng/Regions/Middle-East-and-North-Africa/Oman).

Ethics and IFLA initiatives

The Oman library association was only established in March 2007 and, as a result, a code of ethics and the adoption of the IFLA Internet Manifesto and Glasgow Declaration have not been considered yet.

Main indicators

Country name:	Oman (Sultanate of)
Population:	3 204 897 (July 2007 est.)
Main language:	Arabic (official), English, Baluchi, Urdu, Indian dialects
Literacy:	81.4%
Literacy reported by respondent:	70%

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

**Sultanate
of Oman**

Libraries and Internet access

The Sultanate of Oman participated for the first time in the IFLA/FAIFE World Report in 2007. No comparisons can therefore be made with previous reports.

Library services

Estimated number of public libraries*:	About 50
Estimated number of school libraries:	700
Estimated number of university libraries:	20
Estimated number of government-funded research libraries:	2
Source of these numbers:	Directory of Libraries in Oman; Ministry of Heritage and Culture

Internet access

Population online**:	245 000 users as of Sept. 2005 (10.0%)
Percentage of public libraries offering Internet access to users:	Less than 20%
Percentage of school libraries offering Internet access to users:	21-40%
Percentage of university libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100%
Percentage of government-funded research libraries offering Internet access to users:	41-60%
In your estimate, how much local content*** is available on the Internet:	Average
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
Is the use of filtering software widespread in your country's libraries:	Yes, to a certain degree – to protect children and to safeguard religious values, the national ethos/culture and public morality
Is it free of charge for library users to access the Internet on library computers:	Yes, in university libraries, school libraries and statutory research council libraries
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

* 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.