

# Stichting IFLA Global Libraries Report on Activities 2024

## Background

Stichting IFLA Global Libraries Foundation (SIGL) is an independent public benefit foundation established in 2016. The objective of the foundation, which is exclusively charitable and educational, is to empower libraries to improve people's lives and support growth of sustainable societies.

SIGL was established as a Stichting (foundation) to manage the legacy funding from Bill and Melinda Gates Global Libraries Programme. The purpose is to build on over 10 years of work in the library field and "leave the library field strong."

The SIGL Board is responsible for the governance and financial and professional direction of the foundation. The Board is charged with the management of the foundation. Its duties include the annual adoption of a budget and a current policy plan that provides insight into the activities to be carried out by the foundation for the realization of its objective, the manner in which income is to be raised, and the management and deployment of the financial resources of the foundation.

By end of 2024 the SIGL board consists of three members: Gloria Perez-Salmeron (chair), Victoria Okojie (Secretary) and Agnes Barátné-Hajdu.

In 2024 the SIGL board organized 9 board meetings.

This report will focus on the activities undertaken by IFLA in support on the legacy initiatives throughout 2024.

## Key highlights 2024 are as follows:

We have as an overall goal to see libraries delivering meaningful impact in support of the SDGs. We believe that to do this, we need to ensure the ongoing strength of the library field, and in particular to strengthen partnerships between libraries and other actors as defined in the Global Vision.

In 2023 we worked with IFLA on following projects to achieve our goal to strengthen the global library field in order to improve people's lives.

## SIGL financed activities 2024:

### 1.Stronger Regional Fields

*Our work under this project is based on the understanding that we need to strengthen library associations and wider fields, both in order to animate and support the field, and to become recognised as essential partners in delivering positive change. We need strong fields at both the national and regional levels, supported by relevant data to facilitate partnership-building, both in terms of insights as to where to focus, and to steer investments.*

#### 1.1. Regional Meetings

Regional meetings have an important role to play in delivering on the overall goals of the Legacy grant, serving as an opportunity not just to provide training, but also to drive engagement and build networks that can last well beyond the time spent together. In addition, we have also identified their potential to be a means to advance the profile of emerging leaders, as well as accelerate the work of Regional Division Committees.

In 2024 SIGL financed one regional workshop (in Latin America and the Caribbean – LAC).

Highlights include:

- An ambitious programme in LAC, with events in Buenos Aires and Santiago for a group of 35 participants. These included updated programming (based on 4 lessons learned from previous editions), with new content focused on partnerships and seeking grants, as well as a focused workshop on building the capacity of associations to provide skills development. SIGL also financed a workshop with a range of UN agencies at the UN offices in Santiago
- The subsequent survey saw 100% of respondents giving positive results about the effectiveness of the workshop, with an average score of 3.63 out of 4.

## **1.2. Update Building Strong Library Associations**

Our work here focused on building an understanding about the impacts of the previous Building Strong Library Associations programme, the lessons that we can draw from this, and the areas where any future programme may need to focus. Following an open tender, the contract for this work was offered to QualityMetrics.

The resulting report, completed in 2024 and published in early 2025, draws on survey and interview work with library associations, including participants and trainers in the previous BSLA programme. It underlines the value of such programmes and positive assessments of their overall impact, as well as useful lessons about how to ensure the lasting impact of training programmes. In addition, it provides a framework for thinking about association needs into the future, with a particular focus on the ability to mobilise funding and deliver on projects. This provides both a self-assessment tool for associations, as well as a basis for identifying needs and moving into the next phase of work to build the capacity of library associations to play a central role in animating wider library fields.

## **1.3. Supporting Libraries Globally in Partnership Development**

Work under this activity focused on building on the report produced as part of the carry-over projects from 2023, and which explored the landscape for partnerships between libraries and other actors at the global level, as well as the changes that might be necessary to seize opportunities. In 2024, SIGL commissioned two further reports, focused on Asia-Oceania and the Middle East and North Africa. The two regions were chosen as pilots for this work, with a view to replicating such work in other regions subsequently.

SIGL commissioned K2P2, an independent consultancy with strong experience in bidding for projects around education in different regions, and a strong record of success. K2P2 also carried out the previous research into the partnership landscape at the global level.

The work consisted of a combination of the consultant's existing knowledge, desk-based research, and engagement with regional actors (both libraries and funders), including site visits.

Highlights included:

- The delivery of the two reports, which not only provide insights into how to improve capacity to bid for funding for library projects, but also concrete proposals for the sorts of projects libraries can develop and seek funding for.
- These have been shared with Regional Offices and Regional Division chairs in order to support their planning.
- The reports will inform future planning about how to build regional capacity to develop partnerships and bid for funding. They will also be part of the handover to the next Regional Division Committees, and have informed how IFLA establishes priorities for the Regional Offices.

## **1.4. Stronger Regional Structures**

IFLA's regional structures were created with an explicit mandate to develop programming and projects which would help strengthen regional and national library fields by bringing together relevant actors and adapting action to local characteristics.

SIGL gives them particular support to achieve this mission, both through financing day-to-day assistance and enabling in-person meetings.

### **1.5. Understanding National Fields**

Work here has focused on building the foundations for future investments in developing stronger national library fields, better able to bid for and deliver on projects at scale, as well as to support the profession and the communities it serves in general. This work takes place in parallel, and in coordination with that on updating BSLA, recognising the key role of associations, but also the reality that in many countries, other actors may have a key structuring role.

Work here was led by a from SIGL financed consultant – David Baker – who won a competitive process, and was carried out through a combination of desk research and interviews with experts from around the world. The process as a whole provided a useful opportunity to explore in more depth the concept of a library field.

Highlights included:

- A publicly accessible report providing valuable insight into understandings of the concept of a library field, which will support communication about the topic going forwards
- Assessment of the characteristics of effective library fields (in particular in terms of delivering policy goals at scale), including a typology and set of questions that can be used by actors in the library field both to understand their own fields, and compare how they work with others.

### **1.6. Boost Connectivity**

Work under this sub-project focuses specifically on developing data and a proof-of-concept for a library layer on the UNESCO-ITU GIGA Initiative. This supports both the targeting of investment in connectivity, and in other projects involving digital, by mapping (geo-locating) schools and how well they are connected to the internet. By identifying gaps, it becomes clearer where more needs to be spent, while when it is possible to show that there is good school connectivity, projects that depend on this can be launched.

The work enabled here centred both on engaging a from SIGL financed developer to build a prototype of a website that can display data from at least three countries, covering the same aspects of connectivity as the GIGA project, and proactive data gathering. The latter work was

carried out by individuals – financed by SIGL - working in their own countries (and beyond) to establish as comprehensive set of data as possible (and covering at least half of the total population of a library type). The countries covered by consultants are Rwanda, Zambia, Cameroon, Lebanon, and Iraq. We have also engaged with the Chilean Public Library System in order to identify data that can be shared from there.

In addition, we ran a survey in order to allow other libraries to input their information directly.

Highlights:

- The prototype has been delivered, with the next step being to build the website proper.
- In parallel, the individual consultants have also rapidly advanced in their work, sharing overviews of achievements so far in line with their obligations. Work has

continued since the reporting period, meaning that once a website can be built, it can already be populated.

- In addition, the direct collection of data will also help identify priority issues for wider work to support libraries to thrive in a digital world, and in turn do the same for their communities.

## **1.7. Building Capacity for Impact**

*Our work under this project comes from an understanding that integrating practices of planning for impact will help libraries go still further in driving positive change in communities. We invest efforts both in spreading skills and demonstrating potential through the Library Map of the World, as well as in realising the potential of IFLA's volunteer structures as spaces to identify and develop good practice and deliver training in areas that should unlock impact (pedagogy and grant-writing).*

### **1.7.1 Generate a culture of impact**

Work in 2024 has built on the train-the-trainers event held in November 2023, and has focused on enabling our trainers to share the lessons they have learned with a wider community and deliver the training programme in their regions. Those who participated in the event in 2023 committed to holding at least one event, but most held more, both within their own countries and internationally. The support of SIGL for travel and accommodation helped make this possible.

Highlights

- Thanks to the engagement of the trainers over the year, over 1000 people received training in how to plan for impact and evaluate success. We recognise in particular the work of our Australian, Omani, German and Sri Lankan trainers who have been very active in sharing learning with others.
- Very positive feedback from training participants with nine in ten librarians confirming being better prepared to evaluate and demonstrate impact of libraries.
- The Latin American and Caribbean trainers took on special roles in the regional workshop in LAC, sharing their learning with all present, and offering advice and support to other participants.

### **1.7.2. Skills on grant-writing and training**

Our work here is based on the belief that there is a huge potential that already exists in the library field, both in terms of knowledge that can be shared, and ability to deliver on policy goals. Regarding the first, we argue that a key facilitator will be to help more professionals to present their experience and help others to develop skills and knowledge effectively. Without effective pedagogy, this sharing is less effective.

Regarding the second, libraries need to develop their ability to talk to funders and attract investments.

In response, SIGL financed courses from recognised experts in the field. Lisa Hinchliffe offered a series of training sessions on online and blended learning, providing structures and insights on how to plan and deliver education. She subsequently offered coaching to a set of

participants chosen from among the session participants, in order to help them develop their own materials.

Peter Upton offered – financed by SIGL - both a webinar and a set of training materials on building (funded) partnerships, from making connections, delivering success, and maintaining and developing these.

Highlights included:

- Very positive feedback from participants in the training sessions offered, as well as over-subscription for the coaching sessions offered.
- At least two of the recipients of coaching have now finalised training materials that they can use, drawing on the lessons they have learned.

### **1.7.3. Develop the Library Map of the World**

Work – financed by SIGL - around the Library Map of the World continued in 2024, with the same focus on providing a single source of key data about libraries, and to support advocacy by sharing great stories about how libraries are contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

A particular focus was on commissioning work to allow for a complete revision of the Library Map of the World website. In addition to the desirability of a new look and feel, the current infrastructure is getting old, with the risk of periods of inaccessibility.

Therefore, following an open competition, SIGL commissioned a developer, Mediya, to do initial work around an update. This has included models for both the structure and look and feel of an updated Map.

Highlights

- We have continued our support for the Library Map, which by the end of the year had data from 147 countries and territories, 58 SDG stories and 31 country profiles. We also worked through IFLA's Regional Division Committees to reach out to more potential contributors around the world, with the Latin America and Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, and North America achieving useful breakthroughs. As the result of this engagement we received numerous submissions of information for country profiles, with the greatest number coming from MENA region, which will see their publication on the Map in 2025.

## **2. Advocacy**

*Our work under this project combines with efforts to build capacity for partnerships above by focusing on outreach and attitude change among our potential partners. Both through direct engagement by IFLA in international spaces, and developing and exploiting tools to strengthen advocacy at all levels (including by training new cohorts of library advocates), we can work to convince potential funders that investing in libraries offers an effective way of achieving their goals.*

### **2.1. Show libraries' contribution**

Work under this sub-project contributes to the wider goal under the Legacy to carry out research that helps build the case for the integration of libraries into wider policy agendas – and with this the necessary support to realise their potential. It is particularly valuable to commission research from non-library sources, as this gives us access to different policy communities than we might have otherwise.

In 2024, we prioritised work around the place of libraries – and library associations in particular – in climate empowerment. This is an area where governments have made commitments as part of the COP process, and are looking for ways to deliver. Libraries have the potential to step forwards here, and benefit from associated funding, but it is important to make the case in a way that works for the relevant authorities.

SIGL therefore commissioned Aaron Redman, a researcher who has already done some work around libraries and climate empowerment, to carry out further research and analysis. By looking at associations, we can also present how libraries can offer ways of achieving climate empowerment goals at a systemic level.

Furthermore, SIGL also financed the launch of the 2024 Development and Access to Information Report, as part of a carry-over project from 2023.

## **2.2. Develop an advocacy community**

Our voice as a field is stronger when a wider community of librarians has the confidence and skills to engage in advocacy. Librarians need to see that they have the right and legitimacy to speak up, as well as familiarity with decision-making structures and how to articulate arguments effectively. Our work under this sub-project focuses on giving a growing group of librarians the experience of engaging in advocacy around the United Nations, as well as the founding of a library advocacy community of practice.

On the first, SIGL financed to bring a delegation of six librarians from different parts of the world to the United Nations High Level Political Forum in New York. The librarians primarily came from countries presenting Voluntary National Reviews of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In advance of the Forum, IFLA coached them in engaging with their New York missions and authorities, and then supported them throughout the event to engage with national delegations. On the community of practice, we identified four particularly active voices and IFLAQ worked with them to form the core of an online community. They contribute by sharing materials, as well as engaging in discussion and answering questions on the chat.

Highlights include:

- Very successful engagement by our delegation in New York, with each member succeeding in engaging with ministers, senior officials and diplomats from their country. Library representatives spoke twice in plenary sessions, and the need for strong libraries was highlighted by governments. A discussion meeting at the Argentine Mission was held, where important steps towards the creation of a Group of Friends of Libraries at the United Nations were made.
- Our Library Advocacy Community of Practice has grown to around 40 members so far, with active participation on the discussion list and a growing set of resources for use.

## **2.3. A place for libraries in development agendas**

Closely linked to the work to build communities, activities under this sub-project focused on achieving stronger recognition of libraries across a range of policy areas where there are international discussions and processes in place. Particular priorities are internet governance and climate, as areas where we also see strong potential for libraries around the world to demonstrate their potential and seek funding and partnerships.



Under this activity, SIGL therefore financed to engage in COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, as well as the Internet Governance Forum – both the global edition in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and in the regional edition for Africa in Addis Ababa. SIGL also financed engagement in the Culture2030 Goal campaign, both in helping to advance coordination and preparing materials to support its work.

Highlights included:

### **3. Leaders and Trends**

*Work under this project focuses on building the sustainability of library fields, through developing leadership skills (in particular among emerging leaders), investing in planning for future programming, and building the skills needed for futures thinking. Through this, we aim both to build the attitudes and human capacity needed to build a promising and optimistic future.*

#### **3.1 Understand Leaders' Programmes**

The ability to identify and support emerging leaders is a key factor of sustainability in the library field, ensuring that we have the talents necessary to continue to deliver for communities into the future. After some years of focusing work to support leaders on grants and engagement around World Library and Information Congresses, our goal in 2024 was to put in place the foundations for the development of a new programme (or programmes) of support, drawing on international good practice.

To do this, SIGL commissioned a report which would allow for structured reflection on library and related leadership programmes around the world. Following an open call, this was awarded to the Arab Federation of Libraries and Information, who developed work based on a review of the literature around leadership, desk-based research, and a survey. Through this, they developed a typology of programmes, and a bank of data and examples.

Complementing this, IFLA subsequently produced a handbook, allowing associations and others to work with the research report in planning their own programming.

Highlights include:

- Two public reports, one focusing on the research and analysis, and another structured as a handbook to reflect on leadership programming with already over 600 file views. This managed to draw on a total of 65 different programmes – an impressive level of engagement.

#### **3.2. Develop a Programme and Communities**

As highlighted in the previous sub-project, making the most of the IFLA World Library and Information Congress as an opportunity both for learning and profile-building has been the core of our leadership programming in recent years. In 2024, the IFLA Information Futures Summit provided a chance to continue to pursue this mission.

SIGL's funding here concentrated on bringing a group of emerging leaders, selected by a jury following an open call for candidates, to Brisbane. In this, we aimed to maximise diversity, as well as recognise those with the strongest plans for how they would deploy lessons learned. The leaders chosen were given the task of acting as rapporteurs for the Summit, with a group coming to the stage at the end of each day to share key takeaways. The same leaders then



also took part in a workshop after the Summit – see the section on the Trend Report for more.

Highlights include:

- The leaders all reported a very positive experience at the Summit, and a number have highlighted how this has helped them advance in their careers and association engagement subsequently
- The leaders' summing up of the days at the Summit were seen by some as a highlight, while the leaders themselves felt that the experience gave them confidence.
- See the section on the Trend Report below for further highlights.

### **3.3. Deliver on the Trend Report**

As with the original, a key reason for undertaking this work was to provide libraries and library and information workers around the world with a tool to help them in their planning. Through this, the ambition is to promote longer-term thinking, and build resilience. A particular goal with the 2024 report was to build a culture of futures thinking in the library field more broadly, in order to make this part of standard library practice. Following an open call, the tender for the preparation of the 2024 Trend Report was awarded to Professor Michael Dezuanni and Dr Kim Osman of the Queensland University of Technology. Working with IFLA, in a first phase they prepared a literature review, drawing on over 400 sources around the world, and identified a set of seven trends for the future of knowledge and information. In a second, they produced a set of ten scenarios for different futures, building on the intersection of the Trends (and informed by a survey of where people felt the strongest connections were). SIGL also commissioned six external experts with different views on knowledge and information to provide their own ideas.

Finally, SIGL financed to bring together the leaders awarded grants for the Information Futures Summit (see above) with a set of additional leaders who had shown strong potential in the past in order to hold a workshop a Skills Agenda for the Trend Report. This started by discussing the implications of the trends discussed at the Summit on skills needs, and then looked at how to build a training offer to respond.

Highlights included:

- The publication of the Trend Report at the Information Futures Summit. This has been very warmly welcomed and represents one of the most popular resources on the IFLA Repository (over 4000 views). IFLA also collected strong anecdotal evidence of how it is already being used in different ways.
- The publication of the Skills Agenda for the Trend Report, a jointly authored report from the leaders present at the workshop, which proved a very positive experience for all. Furthermore, some of the leaders have combined their workshop experience with the coaching in teaching highlighted above to create learning materials. This has received almost 1000 views.