

Stichting IFLA Global Libraries

Report on Activities 2025

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."

By end of 2025 the SIGL board consists of three members: Gloria Perez-Salmeron (chair), Victoria Okojie (Secretary) and Agnes Barátné-Hajdu.

Activities 2025

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.

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.

In 2025 the SIGL board organized 15 board meetings.

Between the meetings the board stayed in regular contact via e-mail and Zoom to manage the organization and to control the fundings.

A special focus was given to reorganize the model of funding for IFLA. The chair and the board members had numerous meetings with advisors to establish a new model.

Finally, in June 2025, SIGL and IFLA signed a Project Funding and Endowment Agreement - the so-called PFE Agreement – that regulates SIGL's support for IFLA until 2030, the expected end of SIGL. The agreement gives both organizations planning security and will optimize their joint work for the benefit of the global library field.

In 2025 the SIGL Board strengthened its advisory and professional support for the global library field by active participation in conferences, high-level meetings, and lectures. SIGL board members gave lectures at national and international conferences, wrote articles for journals, answered questions of collages from the global library field and supported colleagues to strengthen their position in negotiations and national and international policy plans.

1.General Activities, Travels

To fulfil their duties, the SIGL Board stayed in regular contact via e-mail and Zoom to manage the organisation, to control the funding and to be responsive to the global library field.

Additionally, SIGL participated:

1.1 ALA 2025 Conference, Philadelphia, 26 – 30 June, 2025

A SIGL delegation attended the ALA conference in Philadelphia, USA. The ALA conference hosts the biggest gathering of librarians across the globe, with over 14.000 participants, among them 165 participants from 44 countries. The main aims include to stimulate innovations, provide the platform for networking and the generate ideas to progress the library field. The SIGL delegation used the opportunity to get in contact with international key players, answered questions, updated their knowledge about the latest developments and supported IFLA at their conference booth.

1.2 UN HPLF, New York, USA,14 - 23 July 2025:

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was convened from Monday, 14 July, to Wednesday, 23 July 2025, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, in New York, USA.

The theme of the HLPF is “Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind”.

Therefore, a SIGL delegation used the opportunities of the HPLF and had the chance to get in touch with a wide range of expertise and stakeholders, including academics and other experts, and representatives of major groups and other stakeholders to explore how SIGL could support most effectively libraries in the process.

1.3 WLIC 2025, Astana, Kazakhstan, 18 – 22 August 2025

This was the first time that IFLA conference was held in Central Asia. About 1630 participants (370 from Kazakhstan) from 114 countries attended the conference with the theme “Uniting

Knowledge, Building the Future”. The President and President-elect’s combined theme “Stronger, Bolder Together” resonated well throughout the conference.

A SIGL delegation attended the 89th IFLA WLIC in Astana in August, 2025. In-person attendance made it possible to fulfil their different roles and responsibilities, including oversight of the conference, networking and, as IFLA Officers, to participate actively in the activities of professional units. The SIGL board members attended as many sessions as possible (as usual, there were so many interesting parallel sessions) and got a good overview of IFLA’s work – financed by SIGL.

1.4 9th REDARTE Libraries Seminar: Arte e Acervos em Mutação: desafios contemporâneos das Bibliotecas de Arte. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 8-9 October 2025.

SIGL was invited by the Instituto Cervantes in Rio de Janeiro to deliver the opening lecture of the Seminar: *Art and Collections in Changing times: Contemporary Challenges for Art Libraries*.

Lecture of 90 minutes entitled “Libraries in Motion: Activate for Change”, intended to provide a space for questioning, reflection and sharing of experiences in the current moment, which has been demanding from information professionals a new stance in relation to the repercussions of the new models of representation of Information arising from the new information and communication technologies in their daily practices.

SIGL participated actively in the seminar sessions and completed her participation discussing with REDARTE president, members of the Board and several more professionals about next steps to make the library field stronger locally, in their network, and together with other libraries in the Latino American and Caribbean Region.

In addition, SIGL used the time to invest one-day meeting with partners and donors of the Cervantes Library, that offers the best Spanish collection in Rio the Janeiro.

1.5 Ministerial Council of CERLALC, Regional Centre for the Promotion of Books in Latin America and the Caribbean of UNESCO, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, October 2025

The meeting of the Council of CERLALC was held in Rio de Janeiro, UNESCO's World Book Capital 2025. It brought together representatives from 21 Ibero-American countries, as well as multilateral organizations and observer entities. The meeting marked a new cycle of work for reading and books in the region, with key decisions for strengthening public policies related to reading, writing, and oral expression.

SIGL was invited to speak as an international observer during the Council meeting. SIGL took advantage to participate actively twice and remarked the need of political and social training for librarians in the Region.

The ministerial delegations discussed the current challenges facing the book ecosystem in the region and agreed on the need to strengthen a common agenda around the right to reading, writing, and oral expression.

The meeting represented an opportunity to respond collectively to a cultural transformation that affects reading practices, emphasizing that the organization must build a technical program based on the real needs expressed by member countries.

As a result of this political event, the member countries approved a Ministerial Declaration that will guide regional policies and the Centre's work on written and oral culture. SIGL was invited to build up this Declaration.

1.6 REDPLANES of CERLALC, Regional Centre for the Promotion of Books in Latin America and the Caribbean of UNESCO, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 14 - 16 of October 2025

Every year CERLALC organises a REDPLANES seminar. Redplanes is the Ibero-American Network of National Reading Policy, Libraries and Plan Leaders, that brings together library authorities from the Ministries of Culture and Education of 21 Ibero-American countries, along with international experts.

SIGL participate actively in two main panels of the Seminar. The agenda was addressed to the challenges of reading, writing, and oral language policies through libraries as pillars of democratic development, equity, and social justice.

SIGL talked about global citizenship, cultural rights, the challenge to achieve an inclusive agenda through libraries and all aspects of contributions of libraries to the challenges.

SIGL identified in the presentation "Join the Forces for Reading and Democracy" inadequate reading skills as a major threat for democracy and our social system. It analysed the major survey on readings of the last ten years, gave an overview of reading policies in European countries and showed the impact of libraries to tackle the challenge.

The Seminar was a great opportunity to have conversations with authorities and professionals of several Latino American and Caribbean countries to know more about Library needs and lines of development as the project to develop a Socio-Political School for librarians in order to training professionals to advocate for libraries and national reading campaigns. SIGL's delegation could give advice with global examples to their colleagues, which was very much appreciated.

1.7 39th Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara Mexico, 27 November - 5 December 2025

Reading is one of the pillars of development of societies, and it's well known that libraries are one of the main actors to contribute to develop reading societies. SIGL is trying to help libraries and professional field to achieve its mission. Therefore SIGL - aligned with its goals - advocates for reading and libraries development. The FIL was an excellent opportunity for it, therefore SIGL attended.

In 2025 the Book Fair, FIL of Guadalajara had the city of Barcelona, Spain, as the guest of honour. It was the first time that more than 70 Catalan authors were translated into Spanish, and an interesting cultural program like, professional talks, exhibitions, musical acts among others, hosted by Barcelona city, was offered to more than 900.000 participants that visited the FIL.

SIGL was invited by the mayor of the city of Barcelona to the official opening of the Book Fair, where the cultural program got started at the Museo Cabañas with the introduction of the main representatives of both governments, the Barcelona's Program Curator, and the General Director of the FIL.

SIGL visited the fair and had meetings with library professionals, and also with AMBAC (*Asociación Mexicana de Bibliotecas*) president and members of the Board of AMBAC.

In the frame of the FIL Professionals Seminar, where it was also invited the Deputy of the Culture Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, SIGL gave a speech in support of the Mexican libraries law to advocate for a law development to strengthen the Mexican library System, afterwards joined a half day meeting with AMBAC members.

In addition, Libraries of Barcelona prepared a Libraries Laboratory together with Guadalajara Municipal Libraries and invited SIGL to deliver the opening speech where SIGL offered a professional master lecture to Guadalajara librarians, titled: "Public libraries a social commitment".

2. Project Funding

In 2025, we worked with IFLA on the following projects to achieve our goal to strengthen the global library field in order to improve people's lives:

2.1. Stronger Regional Fields

Our funding on Stronger Regional Fields is intended to support the emergence of regional and national structures and systems that allow library fields to build partnerships and seek resources that enable them to deliver sustainable change for the communities they serve.

We continued work to finance IFLA to create understanding of what makes library associations and fields stronger and more effective at all levels, launching work to map field structures and determinants of success. We anticipate being able to publish the first elements of this in 2026. In parallel, we worked to shape the action plans of our volunteer groups in order to complement this work, better mobilising resources to this end.

We anticipate further development of a programme of mentoring and mutual support, with the involvement of IFLA's thematic and regional units. Mentoring support will take place, informed by a survey of perceived needs and strengths among associations.

An important area of progress was around the work to update the role of IFLA's Regional Offices. These have an important potential role to play in maximising the ability of the library field to access additional and complementary sources of funding, as well as to form other partnerships that support impact.

A first step in this process was to complete the work - which SIGL financed 2024 - looking at understanding the partnership landscape for libraries in Latin America, the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa. We financed a consultant leading to reports which offer key indications as to

where further investment may be needed as well as specific products that could be developed to help libraries approach funders. These provide guidance for the Offices and IFLA HQ going forward.

To support the IFLA Regional Offices further, we financed a workshop for the Offices in Doha in December 2025, kindly hosted by Qatar National Library. This offered valuable insights into the experience, needs and strengths of each office, as well as a chance for the Offices to explore and engage with our wider focus on sustainability. A particular highlight was a workshop with representatives of funders based in Doha, aimed at supporting Offices to ‘think like a partner’.

SIGL financed the Libraries Boosting Connectivity project, which is designed to provide a proof of concept of the idea of a ‘library layer’ on the UNICEF-ITU GIGA project (a map showing the geolocation and connectivity status of schools). In the case of schools, this has helped unlock investments both in connectivity and internet-enabled services through schools, and we would like to see the same for libraries.

2.2. Building capacity for impact

Our funding on building capacity for impact is intended to ensure that library fields benefit from a critical mass of people with the skills necessary for effective project design, delivery, evaluation, and sustainable impact.

SIGL financed IFLA’s efforts on continuing support to the impact trainers trained in 2023 in order to bring lessons from their work to wider communities, with actions taking place across all continents. Work has taken place in Peru, Myanmar and Kenya, led by trainers from Sri Lanka, Chile and Namibia, as well as ongoing regular work across Australia and New Zealand.

Beyond the work of the trainers, IFLA HQ similarly continued to offer support and advice to colleagues, as well as modelling good practice in evaluation and impact tracking through our own Strategy. Work here is designed not just to allow us to assess our own progress, but also to help other associations and institutions do the same.

SIGL financed IFLA’s work with members to prepare bids for various grants, both from international organisations and other funders, providing valuable experience for the members involved in this work. 2026 will see an intensification of activity here, with the new Business Development Manager taking the lead in developing a programme of support for bidding, backed up by training.

Work on the revised Library Map of the World by Mediya, the external contractor financed by SIGL, is complete, and 2026 is already experiencing an increase in the update of the data. The new platform offers a much cleaner and simpler interface, as well as new possibilities to work with regional facilitators. This comes well in time for IFLA100, and is ready to continue to play its role as a platform for highlighting the contribution of libraries, as well as underpinning insights and analysis. Over the year, the Map once again proved highly valuable in our work with UNESCO and other external stakeholders.

The focus here now moves to sustainability, building up networks of volunteers to support in particular with SDG stories, as well as exploring options to move towards cost-neutrality. We now have a Library Map of the World ready for the future.

2.3. Advocacy

Our funding on advocacy is intended to ensure that Libraries are seen as a key stakeholder group in relevant advocacy spaces, with wide reach and capacity backed up by quality and relevant data.

We continued to finance work to demonstrate the contribution of libraires to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as other relevant policy agendas. A particularly important aspect of this has been our drive to encourage the publication or adoption of relevant texts by others who can help us to expand our reach. The strongest examples have been around UNESCO, where we have seen a briefing on the role of libraries in digital inclusion, as well as the adoption of the revised School Library Manifesto. Thanks to the UNESCO branding that this carry, these texts will have more impact with key external audiences. A further briefing, looking at AI, has also been launched since the beginning of 2026.

Beyond UNESCO, we continued to finance IFLA's engagement with the Culture2030Goal campaign, benefitting from the partnership with other major international NGOs. IFLA played a very active role in the preparation of the revised Culture Goal, launched at UNESCO MONDIACULT, as well as carrying out the analysis of the place of culture in Voluntary National Reviews. With this being the 4th year of doing this work, IFLA also produced a review of the evolution of the place of culture in VNRs over time. This helps build our credibility in the wider development space.

With our funding, IFLA was able to make the most of the series of high-profile meetings throughout the last months to highlight the role of libraries, while also expanding our community of colleagues with experience of engaging in international spaces. A first highlight was the UNESCO MONDIACULT conference, where IFLA not only participated in the launch of the revised culture goal, but also took a prominent role in other sessions. This presence helps cement the profile of libraries as an essential part of the cultural infrastructure in the eyes of funders and partners.

Other SIGL-funded programme highlights included the participation at the World Social Summit, where participants from Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt all made the most of the opportunity to engage closely with their governments and secure better recognition of libraries. The WSIS+20 High-Level meeting in New York saw a librarian address the United Nations General Assembly – a first in the last decade at least, and a valuable point when building a higher profile for the sector. Our work around the COP process has seen a growing interest in work on climate empowerment, with IFLA – and so libraries – very well placed to engage in this, not least through its leadership in the Greening Communities process at UNESCO. Additional engagement allowed for a very active presence at the UNESCO General Conference (including a launch of the briefing on public libraries and digital inclusion) and ongoing engagement around the United Nations, with a view to the SDG Summit in 2027 which will ordinarily launch the process of designing the post-2030 Agenda.

2.4. Leaders and Trends

Our funding in this area is intended to ensure that promising emerging leaders, through engagement with IFLA, advance in their careers, while the library field as a whole more systematically integrates Futures into their own planning and action.

Leadership was a particular theme at the 2025 World Library and Information Congress, with a dedicated session on the topic (building off the research commissioned in 2024), and lively discussion among the audience. This led both to a suggested definition of leadership in the library field (prepared by the recipients of Emerging Leaders grants), and the taking up of the theme of leadership by IFLA's Regional Council.

2025 also saw a new cohort of Emerging Leader grantees - financed by SIGL. A group of leaders from diverse geographies, but with strong growth and leadership potential in common were chosen via a competitive process. In addition to participating in briefings and supporting communications, they played a prominent role in the leadership session at WLIC, leading to the proposed definition of library leadership. They have also contributed 'weak signals' to a publication due out in 2026 that will complement the 2024 Trend Report. With the majority of leaders coming from Asia-Oceania, the relevant Regional Division Committee will also be looking to support them in the next steps in their careers.

In addition to the complement to the Trend Report that will come from the selection of 'weak signals', we also invested significantly in integrating insights from the report into wider work in 2025. The year started with the revised Trend Report (including new scenarios and a chapter on how to work with Trends), as well as the Skills Agenda for the Trend Report, all of which have received positive feedback from the library community. There have been multiple presentations of the report, with a standard slide pack shared to enable wider uptake.

2.5. Connecting the Field

Under this pillar we aim to ensure with our funding that IFLA itself is able to deliver on the potential it has, as the global organisation for libraries, to animate the wider field, and support its long-term sustainability. We can effectively attract, engage, and empower library associations, institutions and professionals, helping them to realise their potential and achieve maximum impact for their work.

Many of the outcomes associated with this are already covered in the achievements listed above, achieved both through direct engagement in advocacy and capacity building, and IFLA's work to support volunteer groups and members to achieve optimal outcomes.

There are however also more cross-cutting activities - financed by SIGL - which underpin the work that takes place above. Highlights of this include ongoing work to reach out to new IFLA members – in particular major institutions – in order to make sure that they are participating in and contributing to the global library field. Similarly, ongoing updates to IFLA's way of working with volunteers include a shift in how action plans are developed and tracked.

An update to IFLA's repository is another valuable step, boosting experience and functionality, and bringing together different resources into one place. This is now a much better platform for learning and sharing across the global library field going forward. Similarly, despite a marked rise in attacks to the website, this has been put onto a sounder basis which again ensures that it can serve as a tool for the achievement of the goals of the Legacy.