

IFLA President Speech on 24th August 2017 Wroclaw, Poland

¡HOLA!

Authorities, all protocols observed, dear colleagues,

I am so proud and honoured to start serving as President of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions after having been involved in IFLA many years.

I am a public librarian who, at just 14 years old, started working as a volunteer in the main public library of my city, Badalona in Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain.

My entire career has been developed in the library field, in different positions that have encouraged me to serve at the highest level in this incredible and well-regarded ninety-year-old organization.

I truly believe that universal access to information is a question of freedom for every human being, and that libraries are the gates to gaining democracy through information for all. Therefore, we, librarians, have the utmost responsibility to use all our skills and efforts, in order to safeguard and widen these gates for the benefit of our societies.

As the Spanish poet Antonio Machado once wrote:

“Caminante no hay camino.

Se hace camino al andar”

(Traveller, there is no path. The path is made by walking).

We, as librarians, can be outstanding at organizing, preserving and disseminating information, but tackling the global challenges altogether is the key to the success of our mission!

Librarians: there is something that we really must believe in and make the “leitmotif” of our work: we have the responsibility for gaining access to knowledge in all its dimensions, and making it a reality for the communities we are committed to.

Our role is much more than running our libraries and information centres day-to-day, much more than agreeing and reaching a consensus on standards

and guidelines, our main task is being the gears of the motors for a real and visible change and the development of our society.

Let us take the UN Agenda 2030 as an opportunity to help people achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through our library activity, let us work together with our governments and institutions in the development of national plans, putting forward initiatives that can facilitate the transformation of our world. I ask you all to make a special effort to bring on board, library authorities and associations from countries all over the world who are not members of IFLA yet. We need to work together more than ever.

There is not an IFLA for Public Libraries, there is not an IFLA for Academic libraries and an IFLA for other particular kinds of libraries. IFLA is the main library umbrella organization in the International arena and only by working as a united library field, involving also our strategic partners and stakeholders, will we succeed in providing successful universal access to information.

I am extremely happy to lead IFLA with the new Governing Board members and the Secretary General and share with all of you, the IFLA community, this new approach that IFLA is carrying out, transforming IFLA into a participatory and inclusive organization where each one of us has a special key role.

This is a great moment, that was already started with the "Call to Action" by Donna Scheeder and the outgoing GB members. Thank you very much, Donna!

I am sure that I can count on all of you to build together a United Library Field.

My program as IFLA president 2017-2019 is aligned with IFLA's new approach towards a participatory and inclusive organization, looking also for its sustainability. I am going to focus on changing our mindsets being highly effective in social involvement, as leaders advocating for important issues like Information Literacy, Digital Transformation, Innovation, Digital Preservation and Copyright Reform. We need to create an effective synergy among library networks to take advantage of and synchronize the tremendous work we must do over the coming years.

We will achieve this commitment because we are powerful and passionate and we know better than anyone one else that “Libraries are the motor for change!”

I am very pleased to meet you all face-to-face in our yearly General Conference and Council, and I am totally convinced that what is really worthwhile and will make a difference right now is what we are going to achieve working together with our advocacy work every day, 365 days a year.

I count on you all, those who are involved in IFLA's 60 professional units - Sections and Special Interest Groups - together with our Secretary General, Gerald Leitner and IFLA staff, National Library Associations, institutions and librarians all over the world. For this reason, it is very important that we share a common vision and structure our responsibilities in order to get effective global results while we act locally and regionally in a synchronized way.

Dear colleagues, I put my trust in you. I believe in our common vision, capacity, commitment and involvement. Libraries are the motors for change, and we - librarians - are the gears that will drive this change, resulting in effective democratic access to information for all people in our societies!

Thank you very much, I count on each one of you!

Glòria Pérez-Salmerón