Dynamic Coalition on Public Access (DC-PAL) in Libraries

Report of the IGF 2014 Meeting

Brief Substantive Summary of the Meeting/Presentation of the Main Issues

The Meeting featured the following panellists:

- Stuart Hamilton (IFLA) (Chair)
- Martha Giraldo, ICT for Development Specialist, Colombia
- Emilar Vushe, Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
- Mike Jensen, Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
- Leana Mayzlina (Worldpulse)
- Nnenna Nwakanma (Web Foundation/Alliance for Affordable Internet)
- Gabriele Guillemin (Article 19)

Stuart Hamilton welcomed the participants and opened the meeting. He gave a summary of the current activity of the members of the DC-PAL, which now has 126 subscribers to its mailing list. In particular he highlighted the work of Beyond Access and the Public Library Innovation Project (PLIP) in raising the profile of libraries as providers of public access to ICTs in the community, and the work they are doing with governments and development organisations in this area. He also reported on the successful work done to get references to public access included in the NetMundial and WSIS+10 outcome documents.

Martha Giraldo and Emilar Vushe gave reports on recent PAL-DC activity at the LAC and African Regional IGFs. At the LAC IGF, Beyond Access presented on the role of public libraries as providers of ICTs in Latin America, and a birds of a feather group was formed amongst meeting participants to hold side meetings on the need to promote public access to information and ICTs within the LACIGF. At the African IGF, IFLA and other PAL-DC members organised a workshop for 200 people on public access to ICTs which involved all stakeholder groups. This workshop resulted in recommendations to the African IGF.

Mike Jensen introduced two recent briefs on public access produced by APC, IFLA and the Technology and Social Change Group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington. The briefs were presented at the 17th Session of the Committee on Science and Technology and Development (CSTD) and the WSIS+10 High Level Events in Geneva. The briefs contain recommendations for policy makers seeking to increase public access to ICTs and utilise recent research to show that libraries are a particularly effective institution to support in this regard.

In the second half of the workshop Gabriele Guillemin, Leana Mayzlina, Nnenna Nwakamana, Mike Jensen and Stuart Hamilton all gave short presentations on how their organisations are working in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, and the big issues on the agenda for them over the next 12 months. All panellists drew attention to the recent outputs of their organisations or relevant reports, including recommendations from WorldPulse about how libraries might better

engage with women and girls, a 2011 UN Special Rapporteur's report on Freedom of Expression that mentioned libraries and access to ICTs in remote areas, and the Alliance for Affordable Internet's Affordability Index, charting the costs of access in over 80 countries, the latest edition of which is to be published at IGF2014.

Finally, Stuart Hamilton introduced the Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development, which was launched by IFLA in August 2014. The document makes concrete recommendations to UN Member States regarding access to information and ICTs in the post-2015 development framework, and has so far been signed by over 265 library and development organisations.

Conclusions

Panellists and participants reported a number of challenges and opportunities facing libraries as providers of public access. In the African context, more needs to be done to ensure that libraries are spaces with up to date equipment and fully trained staff, and attention needs to be paid to increasing political will to fund and support library services. At the same time, a number of countries in Africa, including Namibia and Angola, are taking steps to modernise their library networks and roll out public access points in the community. Likewise, in Latin America, governments like that in Colombia are also revitalising their library systems and building the library's role in the provision of local content.

It was clear that there are a lot of awareness-raising opportunities available now which libraries must take advantage of. All of the organisations represented at the session were actively participating in advocacy activities around public access to ICTs, freedom of expression, access to information for women and girls, or affordable broadband access. All were already working together to push for an appropriate recognition of these issues in the post-2015 development framework, and to build on the NetMundial and WSIS+10 outcomes. IFLA will concentrate specifically on working within the Lyon Declaration signatories to achieve its objectives in this area, and invites all interested parties to sign the Declaration and get involved.

 Some specific recommendations to the DC-PAL for next steps included:

- Involve library and information professionals more at the regional IGFs
- Ensure that the IG agendas for the regions include public access issues, and likewise the main IGF
- Create multistakeholder coalitions in countries to push for increased public access
  - Utilise the recommendations of the public access briefs in this regard
- Continue to advocate at the national level to ensure that national policies and the post-2015 development framework includes reference to the importance of access to information, and ICTs as a means of implementation.
  - Utilise the Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development in this regard.

Reported by:

Stuart Hamilton (IFLA), Co-convenor, DC-PAL