

# IFLA Statement on Defending Inclusive Knowledge Societies

9 July 2025

*At the core of IFLA's values are the belief that access to information and knowledge are fundamental rights and essential drivers of social, educational, cultural, democratic, and economic wellbeing. High-quality library and information services make such inclusive knowledge societies possible. However, these are far from a reality in many places, while in others, they are under threat.*

In the [United Nations Pact for the Future](#), world leaders affirmed in 2024 that 'advances in knowledge, science, technology and innovation could deliver a breakthrough to a better and more sustainable future for all'. Meanwhile, IFLA's own [Statement on Intellectual Freedom](#) makes clear the importance of intellectual freedom - and the independence of libraries - as a precondition for achieving and sustaining the world we want.

This will require affirmative choices.

For libraries, this choice is clear, and we stand ready to deliver sustainable futures for all. However, we are actively monitoring cases of attacks on intellectual freedom worldwide that are directly affecting libraries, and as a result, we are increasingly concerned about decisions and declarations that risk pushing the world in the opposite direction.

In particular, we highlight the following:

- A growing readiness by state and non-state actors to violate principles of intellectual freedom through external interference in library collection policies<sup>1</sup>
- The weakening of systemically important knowledge institutions and infrastructures and their staff, through budget and personnel cuts, disrupting access to research, knowledge and information globally<sup>2</sup>
- The undermining of key support agencies for the library field that help make a reality of networked provision<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See for example growing calls to remove particular books from shelves in the United Kingdom: Creamer, Ella (2025), *Librarians in UK increasingly asked to remove books, as influence of US pressure groups spreads*, 14 March 2025, The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2025/apr/14/librarians-in-uk-increasingly-asked-to-remove-books-as-influence-of-us-pressure-groups-spreads>

<sup>2</sup> See for example the risks to the National Library of Medicine in the United States: Branswell, Helen (2025), *Amid shakeup in U.S. science, researchers express alarm over integrity of key genetic databases*, 10 February 2025, Stat, <https://www.statnews.com/2025/02/10/genbank-sra-nih-genetic-databases-trump-impact/>

<sup>3</sup> See for example the efforts to close the Institute for Museum and Library Services in the United States: IFLA (2025), *IFLA calls for the reversal of cuts to IMLS, archives, restrictions on freedom of research in the United States*, 19 March 2025, <https://www.ifla.org/news/ifla-calls-for-the-reversal-of-cuts-to-impls-archives-restrictions-on-freedom-of-research-in-the-united-states/>, as well as efforts to

- The deletion of scientific and other data that provide an essential basis for research, replicability, and accountability<sup>4</sup>
- The erosion of the autonomy of research and education institutions, restricting their ability to make independent academic decisions<sup>5</sup>
- Efforts to oblige libraries to surveil users and submit reports, violating the relationship between library workers and users<sup>6</sup>
- Cuts to funding for open access and open science<sup>7</sup>
- Growing economic and contractual restrictions on libraries' ability to build collections and work with digital content<sup>8</sup>

These actions damage our societies' ability to develop sustainably. Such damage can take years to repair.

These issues are not unique to any one country, and require a response from libraries and library and information workers globally. The governments that signed the Pact for the Future must be held to their commitments.

Concurrently, we recognise the pressures facing libraries and library professionals dealing with all of these issues. We support them in this work and acknowledge their commitment to serving their communities in the face of adversity. We recognise that people come first- defending collections should not be expected to be prioritised above personal and community safety.

We therefore recommend that:

- **Individual library and information workers** are aware of and are provided with available support if they have concerns
- **Libraries and library services** establish policies, agreed with relevant bodies as appropriate, around collections, programming and activities essential for upholding inclusive knowledge societies

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defund CONABIP in Argentina: ABGRA (n.d.), *Defendamos la CONABIP*, <https://abgra.org.ar/defendamos-la-conabip/>

<sup>4</sup> See the example of climate data in the United States: Baraniuk, Chris (2025), *Inside the desperate rush to save decades of scientific information from deletion*, 23 April 2025, [bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20250422-usa-scientists-race-to-save-climate-data-before-its-deleted-by-the-trump-administration), <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20250422-usa-scientists-race-to-save-climate-data-before-its-deleted-by-the-trump-administration>

<sup>5</sup> See for example Altbach, Philip G and Blanco, Gerardo (2024), *Authoritarian threats to higher education require a response*, International Higher Education, <https://ihe.bc.edu/pub/r84bg9mx/release/1?readingCollection=91c982e6>

<sup>6</sup> See for example in Sweden: Kassam Ashifa (2024), *Sweden's 'snitch' law immigration plan prompts alarm across society*, The Guardian, 11 August 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/aug/11/sweden-snitch-law-immigration-plan-prompts-alarm-across-society>

<sup>7</sup> See for example the Netherlands: Open Science NL (2025), *Dutch Government Officially Cuts Funding for Open Science*, 8 April 2025, <https://www.openscience.nl/en/news/dutch-government-officially-cuts-funding-for-open-science>

<sup>8</sup> See the Communia report on unfair contract terms: Nobre, Teresa, Hackett, Teresa (2025), *Unfair licensing practices: the library experience*, Communia Association, <https://communia-association.org/2025/05/13/new-report-unfair-licensing-practices-the-library-experience-is-out/>

- **Library associations** continue to play their essential role as the voice of their national profession, highlighting challenges and working to achieve solutions, as well as helping individuals to collaborate and take meaningful action in support of one another and foster solidarity
- **The library field** continues to champion inclusive knowledge societies, acting in line with local circumstances to ensure the ongoing safeguarding and dissemination of, as well as access to, knowledge.
- **Governments** recommit to the rights of access to knowledge, science, education and culture for all, and promote inclusive knowledge societies across their policies, notably through support to libraries
- **Governments, funders, and institutions** promote open science, open access infrastructure, data sharing, and collaborative research.
- **The United Nations** monitors the implementation of the Pact for the Future and its underlying principles, as well as continuing to promote the importance of access to information and knowledge as an essential driver of success in delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals.

*Approved by the IFLA Governing Board, 9 July 2025*