



IFLA General Assembly 2024

President's Address

20 June 2024

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you once again Sharon, Martyn, everyone who has contributed and voted here today.

We're almost at the end of the General Assembly, and so it's time to look forward.

I know that when I was giving my report to you as President, I said, more than once, that I would be returning to a number of the topics I briefly discussed. Now is that time.

What I hope that through the presentations today, you have see how active, how dynamic, and how focused the Governing Board and IFLA team are on the future of the Federation.

Through the work of all of you who contribute your experience and energy to driving the global library field forwards, making sure that great ideas are available to all. Through our advocacy, building the profile and recognition of libraries among partners internationally. Through the resources we create and maintain to enable the field. Through the development of ever stronger regional fields.

And also, of course, through what we are doing, led by the Governing Board, to prepare our Strategy and Trend Report, to reevaluate our Congress model, to enhance governance and communication. And, of course to build sustainability.

The centenary of our Federation – 2027 – is coming up rapidly, and it is high in the minds of the Governing Board.

It provides a great anchor, a great focus for us in our work, a challenge even – how can we make sure that we send IFLA into its second century best able to fulfil its missions, to achieve its goals.

Crucially, it challenges us to find a model that makes us sustainable, able to do those things that only an international federation of library associations and institutions can do.

So what's on the agenda?

Regarding that key long-term goal – sustainability – you will have seen clearly in our financial report that currently, we depend strongly on SIGL funding, and the financial success of our congresses, to achieve our ambitions.

Neither of these are guaranteed into the future. In particular, the Legacy Grant managed by SIGL can provide support for a few years more, but is finite. It will run out.

However, I do not think that we should frame this negatively. We have been extraordinarily lucky to benefit from this significant funding boost, and need to see it as an opportunity to invest in the capacity of IFLA, of the global library field, to develop a sustainability model.

We should not think about replacing this support, but rather about how it can enable us to mobilise new resources to make our federation, and so our field, stronger. We need to see this more as a springboard – something to leverage.

This really is an area where my presidential theme – stronger together – applies. Because a key strength that we have is our connections. Amongst ourselves, with our communities, with decision makers. And this is a strength we need to build on.

The goal must be to be in a situation where being a part of IFLA opens the door to new possibilities, new relationships, new impact.

In the very short term we will be making the formal application for ANBI status. This is – as you've heard – a key step to making relationships with potential funders easier.

We will also be working hard to bring together the work we are already doing – to understand opportunities, to build partnerships, to mobilise the field, to ensure that we're ready to partner with others.

Already by this time next year, you will be seeing more structures, tools and opportunities to build partnerships and sustainability, building on, for example, the database of existing library funders already shared.

Next, our Strategy and Trend Report.

As I already mentioned, I'm grateful to all who have contributed to the survey on the draft Strategy. I know we are sending out many surveys, but they have a real and positive impact on what we are doing. Your responses are influencing the decision that are made. The results of each survey are published, so you can see the feedback we are receiving.

The next step here is to update the draft Strategy for agreement at our July Governing Board, and then to enter rapidly into working with our volunteers so that you can

integrate it into your updated action plans. The formal Strategy launch will be at the Information Futures Summit, which I'll talk about shortly.

I am excited and proud of our next Strategy. I am confident we are moving towards a document that provides a much more powerful vision for our Federation, as well as a clearer explanation of how we can deliver it, and why our work matters.

Through this, I hope, we can better bring our own field together, as well as show more directly to partners who we are and what we do.

Our Trend Report too will also contribute to our future success. You will see the literature review – the foundational output – of the 2024 report published soon. And then we're looking forward to an exciting series of discussions and debates allowing us to define potential scenarios for our field in the future of knowledge and information.

We want these to be reference points, stimuli, provocation even for the field, so that we challenge ourselves to think about how we can be most ready to continue to deliver positive change into the future.

And of course, the Trend Report will be launched at the Information Futures Summit. In fact, it will be central to the discussions we'll be having there!

Another ongoing process with significant relevance for our sustainability – both in terms of the life of our Federation and our finances – is our Congress review. As already mentioned, I am very grateful to Leslie Weir, the President-elect, for taking on the task of leading this process.

There are lots of aspects to this review, and having someone with Leslie's experience leading this important work is essential.

This is a year-long process, with relevant decisions due in December, so look out for more. And of course, we've committed to making this process as open as possible, so once again, please do join the townhalls, answer the surveys, and make your views heard!

Finally, there is how we work together as a Governing Board, and how we engage with our members and volunteers. We'll be carrying out an evaluation of how we work at the end of the year, and drawing lessons from this. But we'll also be improving how we share news about our work, including through updates in advance of meetings, and providing concrete opportunities for observers to join.

Beyond that, we're learning the lessons from our first round of townhalls and multilingual mailings. We have also committed to independent survey for IFLA staff – so we can hear

their views on the change program that has been implemented at IFLA Headquarters. And, as per my commitment in Rotterdam there will be a review of the governance structures that came into place in 2021.

Our goal, of course, is to make sure not only that IFLA's governance – and in particular the GB – is working for you, but that you can see it working for you. And we'll be checking if this is the case through member surveys we have planned.

I cannot close this General Assembly without encouraging you to get your tickets to our Information Futures Summit, in my hometown, Brisbane, from 30 September to 3 October.

You will have seen the e-mails about this, and of course I've talked a little about some of the key launches taking place there, of our new Strategy and Trend Report.

But I just wanted to emphasise how much I'm looking forward to this. It's a new type of event for IFLA, built around a central, curated programme. It mixes excellent speakers from both inside and outside the library field, as well as lots of opportunities for open discussions about the themes raised. In the last few weeks we have added many more speakers – so I encourage you to explore the website for more information!

Crucially, the idea is to have everyone addressing the same question – what does the future of information and knowledge look like, and how do we not safeguard the place, and maximise the impact, of libraries in it?

It's a great way of being stronger together!

So take advantage of the early bird rate, which is open to 24 June for global participants.

So as you can see, we won't be taking our foot off the pedal in the second half of my presidency!

There is lots to do, and I know that we will face some hard and complex decisions.

But the goal is worth it: an IFLA best able to realise its potential, to do the things only it can do, for all its members, for the global field, for the communities we serve, and ready to enter into its second century with confidence and clarity.

And we can only do this together.



With that, I want to thank again everyone who has made this Assembly possible – Sharon and her team at IFLA Headquarters, Martyn, our Parliamentarian, all those who have joined us in person and online.

Thank you.

We have exciting times ahead of us.