THE GLOBAL LIBRARY: RESPONDING TO INFORMATION NEEDS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

WHAT DO LIBRARIES LOOK LIKE IN 25 COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD?

LIBRARIES GENERALLY DO BETTER ON ENVIRONMENT MEASURES LIKE NON-Discrimination, AND SOME ACCESS MEASURES LIKE AFFORDABILITY AND SUITABILITY, AND DON’T DO AS WELL ON CAPACITY MEASURES LIKE COLLABORATION AND RELEVANT CONTENT, AND OTHER ACCESS MEASURES LIKE TECHNOLOGY

Information behavior in the world over has rapidly changed with the increasing and widespread popularity of information and communications technologies (ICT). Newer technology such as the Internet and computers has allowed for increased information to be accessible to people, a driving process of informed decision-making, particularly related to decisions about their own development. Public access to information and ICT is an important way in which the gap between those with access to ICT and those without can be reduced, empowering people with access to information and technology toward their goals.

Our poster addresses the role of public access to information and ICT and is based on a large-scale project that was conducted in 25 countries around the world. Our aim was to explore how diverse populations can and do access and use ICT. We study key reasons that affect public access to information and ICT in understanding how various factors such as public libraries meet the information needs of communities and what barriers and successful strategies affect their effective access and use. In partnership with social research partner teams, we engaged in comparative analysis focusing on factors such as physical access to technology, affordability of technology, human capacity and training available for the use the technology, sociocultural factors, local economic, and political environment, and the legal and regulatory frameworks of each country.

This poster highlights the results of comparative analysis of public access settings in 25 countries and focuses on public libraries. We present key findings in terms of information needs of communities. We focus on the role of public libraries in fulfilling the information needs by looking at factors such as basic infrastructure, digital literacy, the role information, ICT training, and political will and public support for libraries. We show the successes, strategies and challenges in our sample to describe some of the barriers and access factors in public access and arrive at policy recommendations to strengthen libraries.

Through this we discuss the changing information needs of communities and how libraries might successfully respond to such changing needs to truly be integral parts of community information networks.