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Opening Speech - The future is digital: ICADLA-1 and the future of African digital content

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The future is digital: ICADLA-1 and the future of African digital content

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Address at the opening of the
First International Conference on African Digital Libraries
and Archives (ICADLA-1)
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Why are we gathered here?

- IFLA focus on facilitating of sharing information, creating synergy and cohesion, and development of standards;
- Deliberate on a policy framework on digitization in Africa;
- Create a strategic framework for sharing of digital content ---locating, communicating and working together on digitization issues in Africa;
- Deliberate on strategies for sharing development information;
- Build on previous and existing networks on digitization.

What has happened since idea was mooted?

- Global recession
- Review of MDGs
- Creation of a framework for a united states of Africa
- A renewed commitment to research and development by most partners
- Africa has hosted its Confederation cup!

What has all this got to do with libraries and digitization?

- All the above speak to generation of information, its storage, its communication;
- As Lor 2009 states, “When decision makers speak about information, they do not have libraries in mind.”
- It is for libraries, archives and information professionals to identify relevance, intervention and opportunity;
- How indeed does digitization relate to global recession, MDGs, united states of Africa, research and development and the Confederation Cup?
  - That is the question.

IFLA's interventions

- Standing partnership with UNESCO on information access;
- WSIS declaration put IFLA and libraries at the centre for information communication;
- President Claudia Lux on "Libraries on the agenda;"
- All seek to identify space for intervention, facilitate dialogues, create relevance and put libraries in the knowledge development cycle;
- Current meeting seeks to do the same.

Africa's digitization agenda

- Do we have one?
- Who is setting the digitization agenda?
  - Priorities
  - Power
  - Technical issues
- Are we able to intervene as practitioners and get our selves on the agenda?
- Do we have capacity to identify opportunity, intervene and sustain the intervention?
- Beyond ICADLA-1…

Beyond ICADLA-1

- Capacity building strategies: especially to influence the game plan;
- Strategy on the future of digital content and preservation of African heritage;
- Policy framework on digitization;
- Platform for sharing information on initiatives on the continent.

Conclusion

- Meeting not an end by itself;
- Africa will have to do it by ourselves;
- Sharing of African digital content critical to development;
- The future is digital: what is our game plan?

- Thank you for your attention
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