

Libraries and Sustainable Development: challenges of inequality in a digital world



Tim Unwin

IFLA President's Meeting
2019, Buenos Aires



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



• UNESCO Chair in
• ICT for Development
• Royal Holloway, University of London

1970s: Cambridge University Geography Department Library



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London



“You must wear shoes. You are not allowed in unless you are wearing shoes”

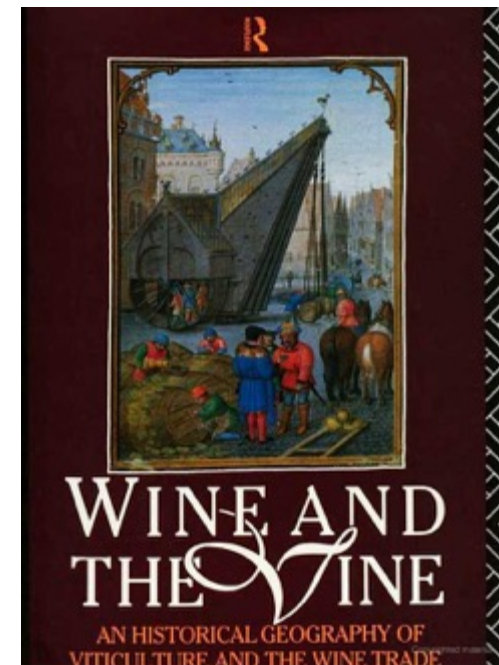
British Library in 1980s: research and writing



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London



Outline



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

- The Sustainable Development Goals
 - Focus on SDG10 and inequalities
 - The role of digital technologies
- Knowledge and Content
- Digital Libraries
 - But not the main focus
- The use of libraries to reduce inequalities
 - Communal interests
- The will to make a difference



For those who think the SDGs are valuable...



Just some questions...



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

Questions in 2019, four years into the SDGs



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

- How many countries have yet agreed on their national targets?
- How many targets can actually be measured reliably?
- How many people can remember all the 17 SDGs, the 169 targets and the 232 unique indicators?
- How many countries have accurate baseline data for 2015 from which “success” in 2030 can be measured?
- Who benefits most from the SDGs?
 - Could the money spent on the “industry” around the SDGs have been better spent in other ways?
 - Are they mainly a means to justify the existence of UN agencies?
- Do the SDGs really serve the interests of the poorest and most marginalized?
- Is SDG10 in tension with the other SDGs?



Problems with data for the SDGs



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London



“The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) *2017 Statistical Yearbook* points to the large number of data gaps in critical areas such as poverty, climate change, environment, gender, inequality, and governance. Overall only 50 of the 169 SDG targets are ready for progress assessment. Over half of the 230 indicators lack agreed measurement criteria (68) or sufficient data coverage (66) for regular monitoring or reporting or both”.

Adams and Judd (2018)
Global Policy Watch

https://www.globalpolicywatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/GPW22_2018_04_30.pdf

SDG 10 on inequality



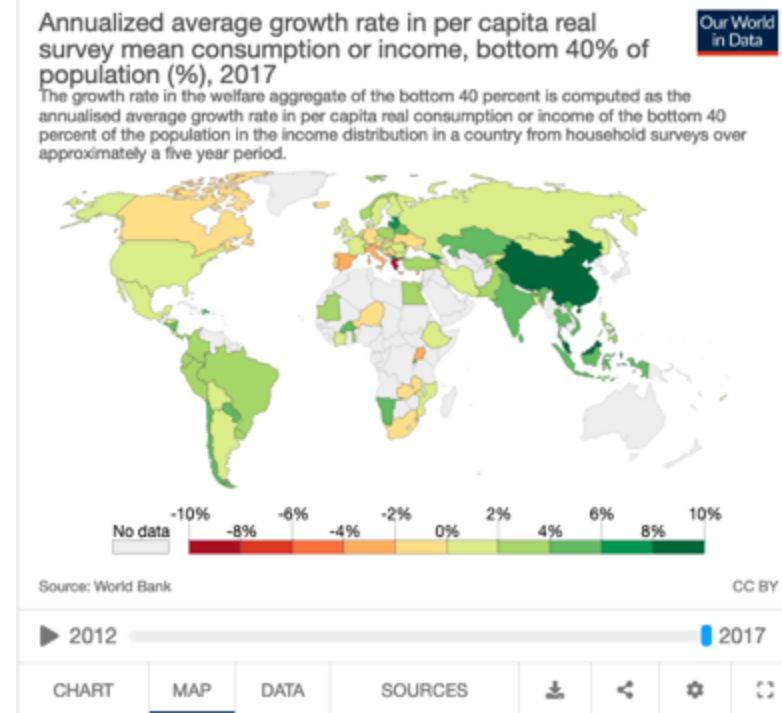
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

- A goal on inequality is an important change from MDGs
 - Which largely focused on growth
- 10 targets for SDG10
 - But only 3 really directly address inequality (10.1, 10.3, 10.4)
- In tension with other SDGs that focus mainly on growth
 - Economic growth has been associated with increased inequalities
- Receives rather little attention
 - Especially in context of ICTs

Indicator 10.1.1



<https://sdg-tracker.org/inequality>

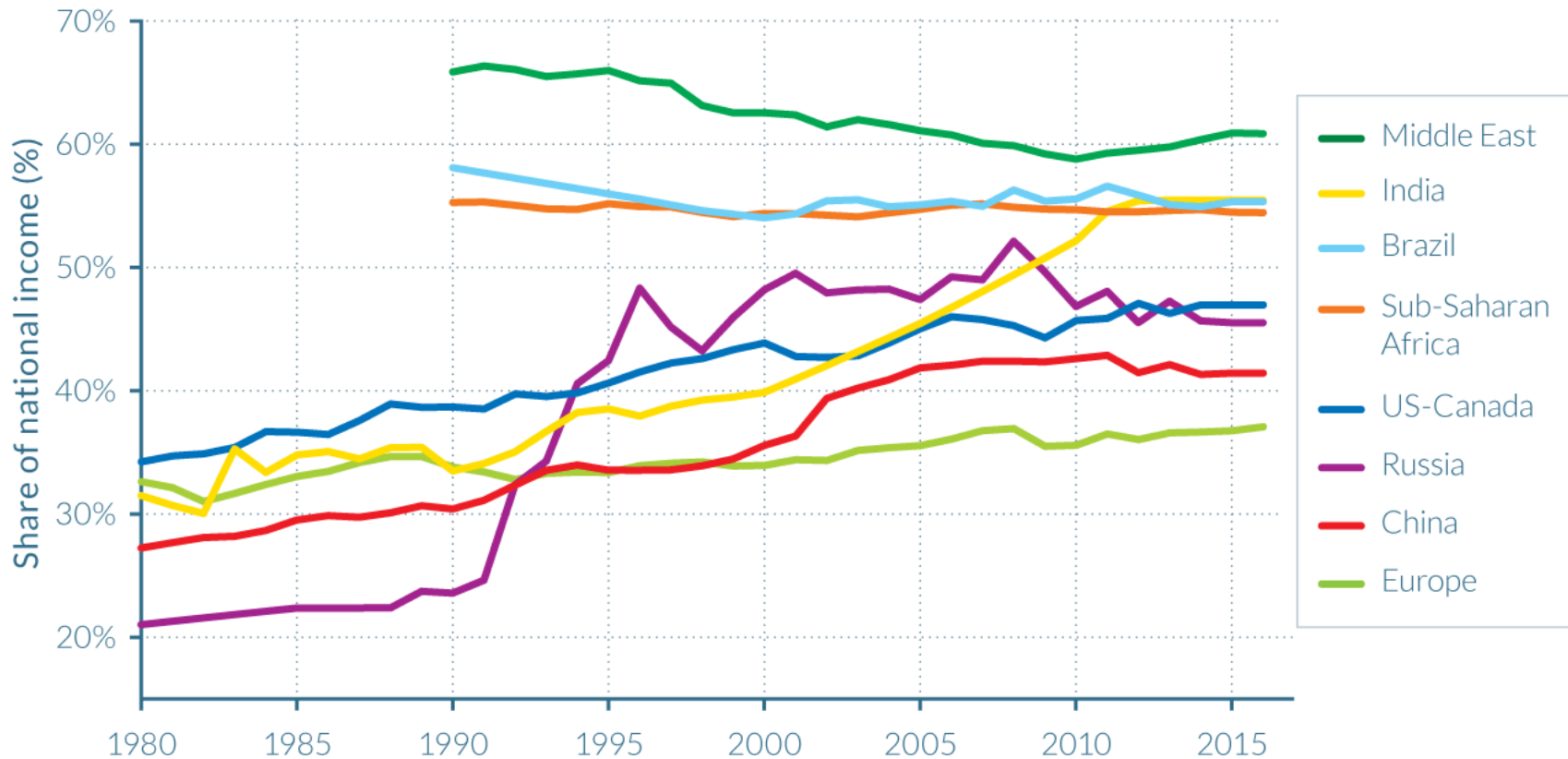
Top 10% income shares across the world



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London



Source: WID.world (2017). See wir2018.wid.world/methodology.html for data series and notes.

In 2016, 55% of national income was received by the Top 10% earners in India, against 31% in 1980.

<https://wir2018.wid.world/executive-summary.html>

Digital technologies *can* be used to empower the poor and marginalised



But the reality is that they
have been one of the main
drivers of increasing
inequalities



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



• UNESCO Chair in
• ICT for Development
• Royal Holloway, University of London

ICTs have been used to increase inequalities

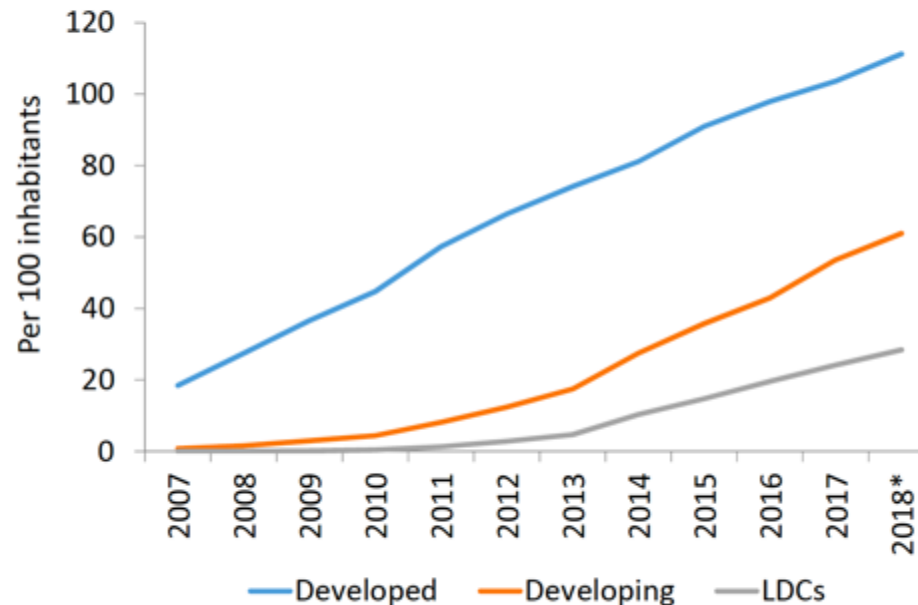


United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

Chart 1.16: Active mobile-broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, by level of development, 2007–2018*



Note: * ITU estimate.

Source: ITU.

Broadband affordability 2016

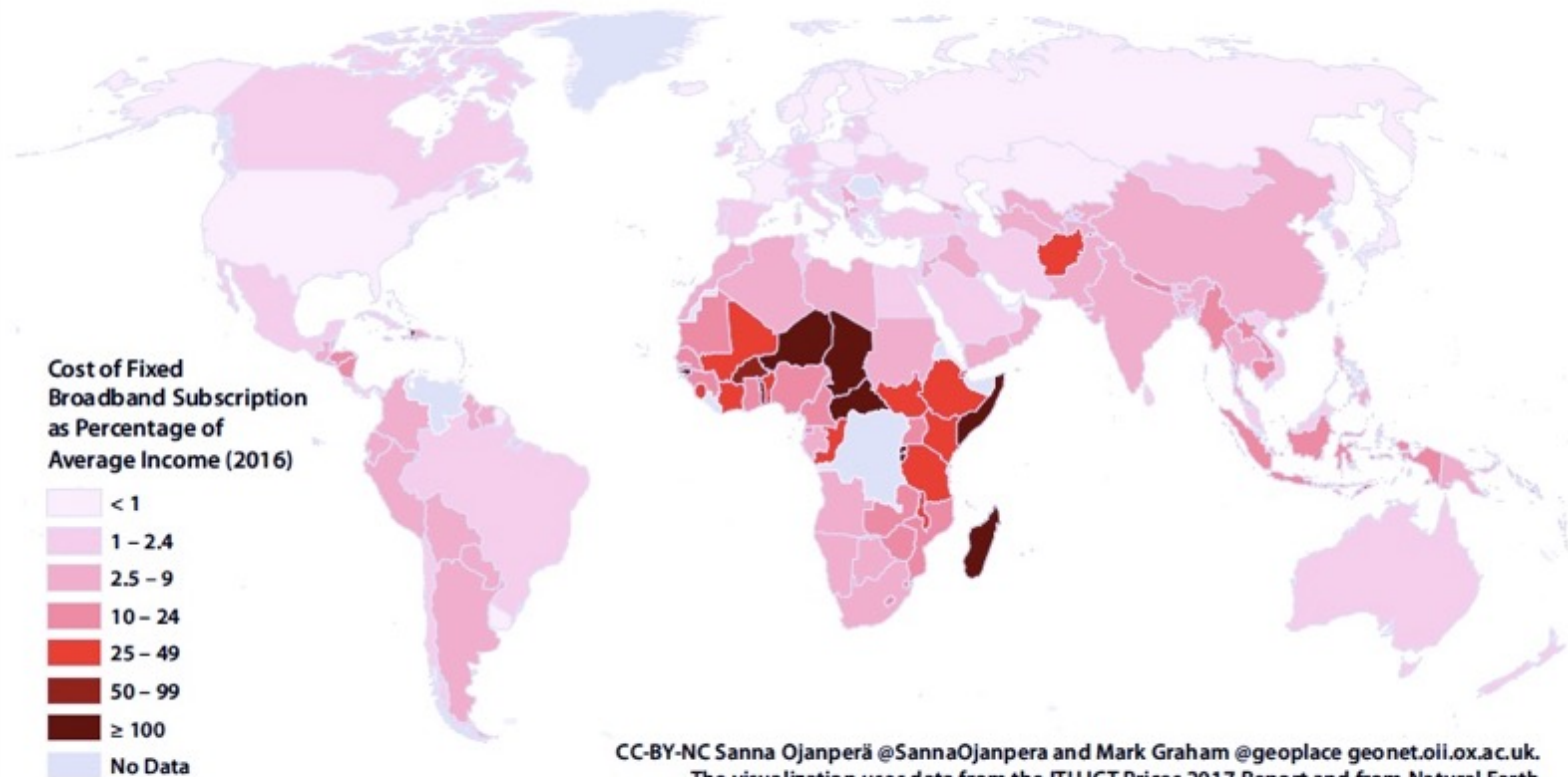


United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

Broadband Affordability (2016)



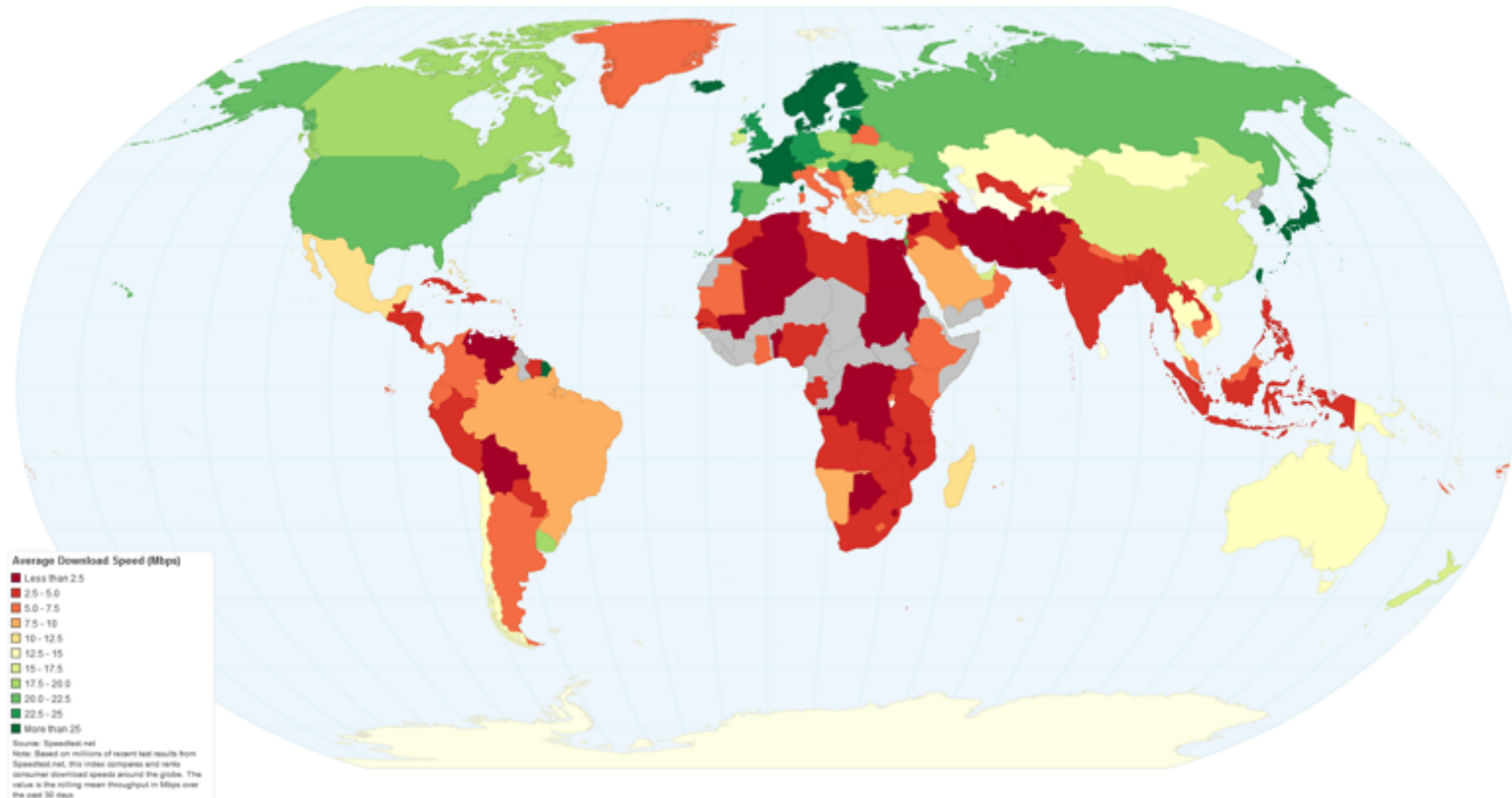
Broadband speeds, 2014



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London



<https://www.vox.com/a/internet-maps>

<https://ict4d.org.uk> <http://unwin.wordpress.com>

Knowledge and content



<http://www.ancientpages.com/2014/12/30/chinese-invention-worlds-first-known-movable-type-printing/>

Some reflections on private and public knowledges and content



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



• UNESCO Chair in
• ICT for Development
• Royal Holloway, University of London

Knowledge and content



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

- Knowledge as power
 - Those who have access to knowledge tend to perpetuate inequalities in their favour
- Need to distinguish between formal and informal knowledges
 - The powerful tend to formalise knowledge for individual gain
- Content and information alone do not reinforce power
 - People must know how to use it to become empowered



Martin Behaim's Erdapfel, 1491-3
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Martin_Behaim_.jpg

Private and public knowledges



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

- The power of the written word in literate societies
 - Private libraries
- Oral societies
 - The more accessible spoken word
 - Cannot easily be privatised
- Public library movements only from 19th century
- Parallels in the digital world between private and public knowledges



Proprietary and open content



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

- Different ways of conceiving the world
 - Difficult to find common ground
- Digital technologies offer the opportunity for vastly increased “free” (to end user) knowledge sharing
 - That can contribute to “development”
 - Open Educational Resource movements
- But only if everyone can access them
 - Otherwise they continue to increase inequality
 - 44% of the world’s population doesn’t have access to the Internet (April 2019)



BY



NC



ND



SA

Poverty, Libraries and Content



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

Concept of poverty	Solutions for poverty reduction	Libraries	Society Type	Content	Software	Direction
Absolute	Individual (economic growth)	Private	Mainly literate	Proprietary content	Closed/Proprietary	Mainly top-down
Relative	Communal (reducing inequality)	Public	Mainly oral	Open access (especially, OER)	Free and Open Source (FOSS)	Encourages bottom-up

Libraries



Digital and as communal places



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



• UNESCO Chair in
• ICT for Development
• Royal Holloway, University of London

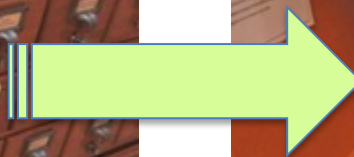
Digitising libraries...



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London



IFLA/UNESCO Manifesto for Digital Libraries



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

The screenshot shows a website layout with a dark green header and a red navigation menu. The IFLA logo is on the left. The navigation menu includes: About IFLA, Activities and Groups, News and Events, Standards, Membership, Supporters, Publications, Annual Conference, and Global Vision. A breadcrumb trail reads: Home » Activities and Groups » Digital Libraries » IFLA/UNESCO Digital Library Manifesto. A search bar is located in the top right. The main content area features a sidebar with links to Digital Libraries, More about this group, News, Events, Publications, and a highlighted link to the IFLA/UNESCO Digital Library Manifesto. The main text describes the manifesto's history, drafted in 2007 and endorsed by UNESCO in 2011. A 'Last update: 24 March 2014' note is present at the bottom right of the content area.

<https://www.ifla.org/publications/iflaunesco-manifesto-for-digital-libraries>

<https://ict4d.org.uk> <http://unwin.wordpress.com>

All Children Reading



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

GLOBAL DIGITAL LIBRARY



<https://allchildrenreading.org/digital-libraries/> April 2018

<https://ict4d.org.uk> <http://unwin.wordpress.com>

Digital Libraries



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

- Much attention has been paid to these
 - So, not the main focus here
- They can provide content
 - But not necessarily “knowledge”
- They generally privilege literary traditions over oral ones
- Without universal accessibility they will increase inequalities



Egyptian Knowledge Bank
بنك المعرفة المصري

So how can libraries contribute to reducing inequalities in a digital age?



www.iplm.in/gallery.html

As communal public places that empower the marginalised



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



• UNESCO Chair in
• ICT for Development
• Royal Holloway, University of London

Micro-libraries



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London



England



Açores



Switzerland

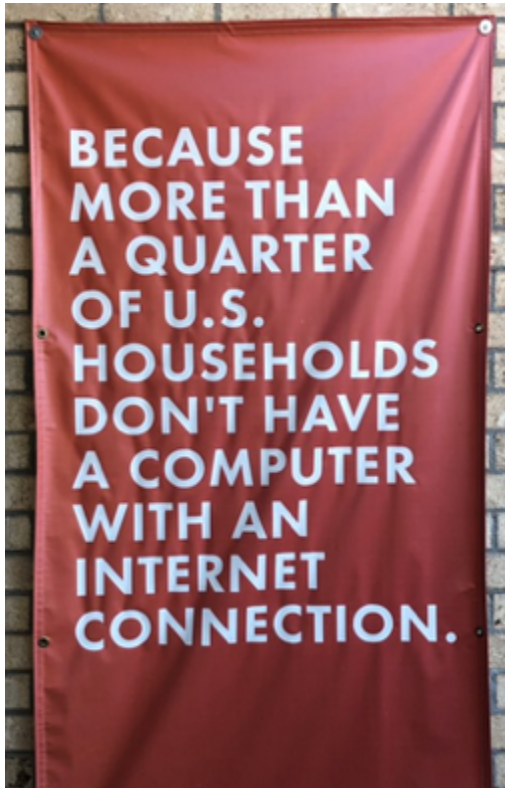
Sonoma County Library – Lending WiFi hotspots to users



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London



The screenshot shows the Sonoma County Library website. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for 'Books & More', 'Services', 'Research', 'Hours & Locations', 'Events', 'Teens', 'Kids', and 'About'. The main content area features a blog post titled 'Borrow the Internet at your local library!' with a sub-header 'Follow Us' and social media icons for Facebook and Twitter. The article text discusses the library's pilot project of lending 500 WiFi hotspots to patrons. A photograph of a person riding a bicycle is included, with the caption 'SonomaFi - Borrow the Internet' below it.

<https://sonomalibrary.org/blogs/news/borrow-the-internet-at-your-local-library>

<https://ict4d.org.uk> <http://unwin.wordpress.com>

Libraries as communal resource centres



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

- Telecentres widely criticised
 - Unsustainable business models
 - A transitional stage in shift to fully literate mobile Internet access
- Community Knowledge centres
 - Access to relevant content
 - Training in digital use
 - Affordable (free)
 - Empowering voices of the poor
 - Multiple uses



Libraries as diverse open places in a digital world



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

- Digital social media
 - Algorithms reinforce own opinions
 - Reinforce minorities across the world
 - Often hidden (Dark Web)
 - Individualistic
- Physical libraries
 - Encourage sharing
 - Places of diversity and consensus
 - Open
 - Communal



We just need the will to make a difference



It's not about the money



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

The will to make a difference



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

- A focus on reducing inequalities not just on achieving economic growth
 - In the interests of all
- Affordable universal access to high quality digital connectivity
 - So the poor can access relevant content
- Libraries serving the poorest and most marginalised
 - Working together to enable the poor to empower themselves
- We can get on and do these
 - Without necessarily worrying too much about the SDGs



Reims: Bibliothèque Carnegie, 1928



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London



(Images from May 2019)

Andrew Carnegie



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London



“A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people”

Andrew Carnegie
(1835-1919)

As a boy, Carnegie's education and passion for reading was given a boost by Colonel James Anderson, who opened his personal library of 400 volumes to working boys each Saturday night

