



DECLARACIÓN

Alternative action programs from Latin America for the information society

DECLARATION FROM BUENOS AIRES On information, documentation and libraries

The attendees at the First Social Forum on Information, Documentation and Libraries: alternative action programs from Latin America for the information society, held in Buenos Aires from August 26-28, 2004, was called by the Social Studies Group on Library Science and Documentation (Argentina) and the Study Circle on Political and Social Librarianship (Mexico).

We recognize that:

Information, knowledge, documentation, archives, and libraries are communal cultural goods and resources. They are based upon and promoted by democratic values, such as: freedom, equality, and social justice, as well as tolerance, respect, equity, solidarity, communities, society, and the dignity of individuals.

Every document center contributes to democratic practice in the social and political spheres. Conscious of this dimension, the foundation and organization of these cultural goods and resources must be constructed under the principal of knowledge and information access that is free, open, and egalitarian for everybody.

Social and political elements also are present that librarians, documentalists, and archivists must take into account in order to contribute to the formation of cultural and civic identities sustained by civil and socially responsible values.

We consider that:

Librarians, documentalists, and archivists must participate in the social and political processes related to their cultural tasks, work environment, and professional practice.

These cultural workers are facilitators of social change, opinion makers, promoters of the democratization of information and knowledge, educa-

tional coordinators, and actors engaged with the social and political processes. Therefore, because the work that they carry out is of fundamental importance to society and the state, they must be granted full social recognition, as well as an equitable and just salary regulated by legislation in each country.

Professional solidarity and cooperation, like networking, are valuable tools that encourage the exchange of successful experiences and broaden the objectives and challenges in our daily work.

Libraries, archives, and document centers must be places that contribute to the development of human rights, the preservation of memory, and the rediscovery of the oral and written traditions that assure the self-determination and sovereignty of all peoples.

Librarian and information services, as well as unrestricted collection development, should be planned, constructed, and offered by librarians, documentalists, and archivists with the full collaboration of individuals, communities, and organizations, particularly the least socially and politically favored.

Both the theory and practice of library science, documentation, and archival studies are determined by the needs that these fields generate in the social sphere. Therefore, the creation and practice of these disciplines and professions must promote public opinion, critical judgment, free decision making, and actively contribute to the struggle against illiteracy in all its forms with the goal of improving life and the collective or personal environment of everyone.

Taking into account their neutral or non-neutral practice, individual thought, labor action, and citizen participation, librarians, documentalists and archivists must construct public spaces in their communities for the exchange of information, thereby providing an incentive for the discussion of political, social, ideological, and cultural themes — themes inherent in governmental and societal problems.

Information, knowledge, documentation, and libraries are a public good that must not be governed or controlled by market dynamics, but rather orchestrated by public developmental policies, well being, and the defense of society's cultural heritage, in the interest of insuring the public domain, diversity, plurality, and the equality of all sectors of the population.

Grounded in the global professional field of information, document centers, libraries, and archives, the construction of discourse, out of the Latin American and Caribbean reality, implies the use of national languages as a means of communication. Additionally, an awareness of indigenous languages as a social and political reality in numerous Latin American countries and the Caribbean requires their recognition as generators of oral and written discourse important to the preservation of these languages.

Peace is a necessary guarantor of, and condition for, the preservation and growth of information and knowledge repositories. In accord with this idea, we firmly condemn wars and all forms of violence that devastate the human species and their cultural heritage. The ongoing promotion of peace and the processes required must become a social commitment of librarians, documentalists, and archivists in their places of work and in the cultural, social, and political spheres that concern them as citizens.

In order to offer services to minority and socially vulnerable groups, it is necessary to eliminate all forms of discrimination in information, documents, and library systems: by sex, race, ethnicity, ideology, economic status, social class, disabilities, migration, sexual orientation, religion, and language.

The serious ecological deterioration of our planet affects life in general and, as a consequence, the well being and quality of life of the human species. We consider it essential that library and information professionals connect environmental problems to the development, organization, and diffusion of information concerning the environment.

We declare that the fair and just distribution of public documents, goods, and resources is essential to the achievement of freedom of access to information.

We invite everyone to contribute to the realization of the statements and propositions in this declaration.

From Latin America and the Caribbean to the information society.

Buenos Aires, August 28, 2004

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