

Librarians and Internet Governance: The case of Botswana

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#### **Abstract:**

As libraries advocate for digital inclusion and public access to internet, it is important to take cognizance of the fact internet, like all other resource has to be governed so as to enable fair usage. Although Internet is more of a public good or commodity, it mostly operates within an infrastructure or backbone that is privately owned (trans-continental or even local area networks) (Kurbalija 2004:18). Internet Governance is also inevitable because, despite the fact that internet is made up of heterogeneous networks, they share a common technological foundation of Internet protocol (IP) (Drake 2004).

This paper discusses some IG thematic areas that are relevant to especially libraries in Botswana. The main contention is that as librarians call for open access and inclusiveness of all into the information society, they have to acknowledge that there are some restrictions. Reference librarians have to be knowledgeable on IG issues that promote or hinder access and usage of internet services offered. The paper also calls for librarians' active participation as stakeholders IG in Botswana. The main research objective is to assess the role that librarians can play in IG. This evokes to sub questions of :(i) who are the IG stake holders in Botswana? (ii) What role can libraries play in IG in Botswana? Qualitative data will be gathered through interviews of stakeholders in IG and librarians at country level. Literature will also be reviewed to help in especially building an understanding of the concept of IG as it relates to Botswana.

**Keywords:** Internet governance; reference librarians; internet governance stakeholders;

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## **1. Introduction**

Contemporary librarianship is about facilitating access to all types of information in varied formats. In today's information led economy, most users prefer to access such information in electronic formats. The internet, as a platform that provides such timely and conveniently flexible interconnectivity of such electronic information, then becomes an essential tool in librarianship.

As libraries advocate for inclusive and public access to the internet, it is important to take cognizance of the fact although the Internet is more of a public good or commodity, it mostly operates within an infrastructure or backbone that is privately owned (i.e. trans-continental or even local area networks) (Kurbalija 2004:18). The interconnections also share a common technological orderly foundation commonly referred to as Internet Protocols or IPs (Drake 2004). It is also important to observe that the information online is generated by some entity, and then transferred through a privately owned backbone. Therefore, both the content and the infrastructure are bound by some control mechanism. It is along this line of thought that both Drake (2004) and Kurbalija (2014) caution that Internet Governance (IG) is a reality and should not necessarily be seen as dangerous.

This paper investigates awareness and participation of reference librarians in Botswana on IG. Qualitative data was then gathered from ten librarians who all had at least 10 years experience in librarianship in Botswana. Although the paper acknowledges that there are other important stakeholders on IG in Botswana, the researcher focused on librarians only. This was guided by the researcher's personal interest in knowing the "worth of her camp" before venturing into partnership with other stakeholders. The paper presents simplified interpretation of IG and Internet Governance Forum IGF at a global scale and in Africa. The IFLA position is also presented so as to help position reference librarians in Botswana.

It is important to note that the paper was motivated by the researcher's recent exposure to IGF 2014 and the commitment to create awareness of the need for stakeholder participation.

## **2. What is Internet Governance (IG)?**

In this paper, the word governance is purposely disassociated with government. The business dictionary defines governance as the "establishment of policies and continuous monitoring of their proper implementation." (<http://www.businessdictionary.com/>). Reference to policy development denotes observation, dialogue and even assignment of roles and responsibilities in the governing process. The definition also implies a form of systematic protocol.

The internet, on the other hand, may be defined as “a complex entity that includes the hardware and software technical infrastructure, the applications, and the content that is communicated or generated using those applications”(Bygrave&Jon,2009).

Internet Governance (IG) then emerges as the system that enables the operation of those applications to generate or transfer content. It brings in technical issues of infrastructure and structure while also relates to the application of policies and regulations of the content.

Internet Governance emerged as a critical bone of contention in the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in 2003 (Geneva) followed by 2005 in Tunis. The debates led to a formation of preparatory committees and then a working group (Kurbalija2014: 8). The discourse then culminated in the framing of the definition as:

*“Internet governance is the development and application by Governments, the private sector, and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision making procedures, and programs that shape the evolution and use of the Internet”.*

This definition recognizes collaborative and cooperative development. The above definitions of internet and governance as used in this paper denote consultation and dialogue of a community of experts and users on the processes of guiding and monitoring the use of internet.

### **3. What Is Internet Governance Forum (IGF)?**

The concept of IGF emerged in preparation as a follow up of the just noted WSIS discussions on IG and has been key in WSIS negotiations. The discussions culminated in the establishment of a multi-stakeholder working group to further deliberate and define the concept. Eventually IG was adopted by the UN and the continued discussions went on in forums that were later commissioned as Internet Governance Forums.

The Association for Progressive Communication (APC), a net of organizations that aims at empowering communities to access and use internet, defines IGF as a multi-stakeholders policy dialogue space convened by the United Nations Secretary General in 2006 to “foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the internet.”

The forum is thus intended to “provide an arena where the world’s internet users, suppliers and public authorities can adopt an independent, reflective stance towards all of the relevant international arrangement” (Mueller & Mathiason:2006).

In addition to the theme of “multi-stakeholder” collaborative and cooperative approach, IG in different forums discussions have ranged from cybercrime; .XXX domains for adults only; issues of domain names and numbers; internet for development; the use of internet in emerging markets; and empowering users; etc. (Kurbalija 2014:9). The increased use of social media has also brought in discussions on privacy and protection of data.

#### 4. Who are the stakeholders in IGF?

Baring in mind that the purpose of this paper is to create awareness, especially for emerging reference librarians on issues of IG, it is of great importance to unpack the stakeholders of IGFs. This is mainly to enable librarians to situate themselves in the broad spectrum of IGF stakeholders.

The IGF is a multi-stakeholder consultative event or process that involves representatives from government, civil society, academia, the private sector, entities and individuals interested in Internet Governance issues. These bodies deliberate on national and international issues of concern on IG; share developments that emerge from international and/regional forums and create awareness about various IG issues.

The table below presents a summation of some of the key stakeholders and examples of their activities.

STAKEHOLDER Type	FOCUS AREAS/ Example
<p>Non-governmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can be technical or non – technical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet Corporation for Assigned Names &amp; Numbers (<b>ICANN</b>)- responsible for coordination of unique identifiers of internet name spaces; responsible for policies related to management of global Domain Name Systems (<b>DNS</b>); generic Top-Level Domain Names (<b>gTLDs</b> like .com; .edu; .gov); Internet Protocol (IP) addresses.</li> <li>• <b>The Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA)</b> is a wing of ICANN responsible for coordinating some of the key elements that keep the Internet running smoothly by managing domain names; protocol assignments etc. Works with Standardizing bodies</li> <li>• <b>Google; Yahoo, MSN, and lately social media companies such as Facebook</b> are corporations specializing in Internet related services and products like online advertising technologies, search, cloud computing, and software.</li> <li>• Research NGO's – address on issues of internet &amp; Human rights. E.g. Electronic Frontier Foundation; these may meet virtually or physically. May invite technical stakeholders like Yahoo &amp; Google for conference deliberations.</li> <li>• Advocate for best practice and protection of online rights</li> </ul>

<p>Intergovernmental bodies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They play a facilitation role</li> <li>- These bodies set norms and standards for internet use; develop treaties &amp; conventions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Examples</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>United Nations General Assembly:</b> Played a critical role in the formation of IGFs; Hosts the global IGF under the department of UN Economic Affairs and the AfIGF secretariat under UN Economic Commission for Africa ( UNRCA)</li> <li>• <b>The UN Human Rights Council</b> a wing under UN general assembly is responsible for promotion &amp; protection of Human Rights on internet.</li> <li>• <b>The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)</b> Specialized UN agency for international collaboration on issues of education, science, and culture. Promotes universal justice and human rights. UNESCO, for example, worked with the African Union to come up with the African Cyber Convention.</li> <li>• <b>ITU- UN specialized agency for ICTs.</b> Zhao (2004) states that it's main function is to regulate international telecommunications (technical transmission, emission or reception of signs, signals, writing, images etc) but not content. It plays a role in coordinating internet related policy issues especially technical standards.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Multi-stakeholders forums</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Combination of stake holders</li> <li>- Harmonize agreements on set standards for varied thematic areas related to access and usage of internet</li> </ul>	<p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Internet Governance Forum (IGF):</b> discuss public policy issues related to both public and private sectors; exchange information and share good practices;</li> <li>• The <b>Tunis Agenda (2005)</b> and <b>WSIS Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG)</b> developed a working definition of Internet governance; this forum included Inter-Governmental bodies.</li> <li>• <b>NETmundial Initiative-</b> was adopted in Brazil in April 2014. Open participation of people from governments, private sector, civil society, technical community, and academia; produced a document which contributed to evolution of the Internet Governance Ecosystem and which formed basis for the United Nations Human Rights Council, 2014 Resolution (A/HRC/26.L.24) on "Internet and Human Rights" which</li> </ul>

	<p>advances protections for human rights online.</p> <p><b>NB: The voice of civil society can be heard from this stakeholder group.</b></p>
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## 5. Internet Governance in Africa

The African Union (AU) is an example of an intergovernmental stakeholder that sets norms and standards in Africa as an internet region. The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), an organization aiming to eradicate poverty and create sustainable growth, serves as the planning and coordinating technical body of the African Union.

The first Africa Internet Governance Forum (AfIGF) was held in Egypt in 2012, followed by Kenya in 2013 and then by Nigeria in 2014. Also in 2012, African Union Conference of Ministers responsible for Information and Communication Technologies in their Khartoum Declaration (2012) requested member states:

*“...to promote the organization of national Internet Governance Forums (IGF) aimed at facilitating dialogue between all stakeholders on ICT for development issues and facilitate the participation of their respective countries in regional and African IGF (AfIGF) activities as well as in the global IGF.”*

In the very year that Africa held its 3<sup>rd</sup> forum (2013) the 8<sup>th</sup> international IGF was held in Indonesia, where there was a dedicated workshop for deepening stakeholders’ activity in IG in Africa. One of the key recommendations from this workshop included the need to identify and focus on national and regional IG forums

With the support of UNESCO, the African Union also adopted the Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (the “Cyber Convention”) on 27 June 2014. This shows that although Africa has its own unique internet challenges, it shares some of the global issues of concern.

NGOs also contribute immensely to AfIGF. These include civil society and business organizations such as the Internet Society (ISOC), Association for Progressive Communications (APC), and the Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA). While these stakeholders mainly contribute non-technical best practices, some bring in technical expertise. For example, the AF\*isa group of various organizations that work towards the betterment of Internet in Africa. The African Network Operators Group (AfNOG) also facilitates the cooperation and the exchange of technical information between operators of Internet-connected networks in Africa.

As noted earlier on, NEPAD serves as the coordinating and technical body for e-Africa. As the gospel of IGF’s spreads in Africa, NEPAD sees the need to raise awareness of IG issues and build capacity of the stakeholders so that they may participate in regional, continental and global discourse on internet access and usage. The agency has been very instrumental in establishment AfIGF.

Presently there are five forums: the West Africa Internet Governance Forum; East Africa Internet Governance Forum; Forum De Gouvernance de l'internet en AfriqueCentrale; North Africa Internet Governance Forum and the Southern Africa Internet Governance Forum. Through the support of OSISA and SADC secretariat, NEPAD and APC helped in setting up the Southern African IGF in 2011, followed by the Malawi & Mozambique IGF in 2014. The 2015 plan is to establish forums in Botswana, Zambia & Zimbabwe and the initial capacity building workshop was held in Gaborone, 1-2 April 2015.

## **6. Libraries and IG**

IFLA has been active in IGF since 2008. The organization's visibility has been through the Dynamic Coalition on Public Access in Libraries (<http://www.ifla.org/node/7026>). The coalition meets as a team of interested organizations that advocate for libraries at the IGF. It is also reflective of IFLA's support for "multi-stakeholderism" in internet governance.

It is important at this point to recall the role of WSIS in the birth of IGF's. It is equally pressing to remind reference librarians of IFLA's special support of WSIS especially in advocacy to information access. Stuart Hamilton, Director of Policy and Advocacy, IFLA, in a statement for the 2014 IGF, reiterated the role of IFLA as stakeholder in the WSIS agenda. The statement called for an explicit positioning of internet in supporting sustainable development. IFLA also called for harmonization of the IG related processes or activities that were already in place. One of the major concerns has also been the issue of protection of library users' data and their information search history or choices.

The former chair of the Botswana Library association attended the 2013 Kenya AfIGF and in the report to IFLA (Radijeng and Kaddu 2013) particularly cautioned the library community to be strategically positioned for effective participation in internet governance. The report calls for education of both librarians and library users on issues of cyber security; freedom of access to information; protecting library users' security; and participation in legislation development. These recommendations directly call for libraries to take an active role as a stakeholder in IG

## **7. Botswana Librarians and IGF**

A total of ten librarians with over ten years experience in the profession and all with a track record of active participation in Botswana Library Association (BLA) were interviewed for the purpose of this paper. All participants were asked four main open ended questions which all sought to establish their awareness of IG and especially its relevance to the profession. The questions were aligned to the IFLA 2012 IGF brief prepared by Stuart Hamilton, Director of Policy Advocacy, IFLA (<http://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/topics/info-society/ifgbrief.pdf>). The brief was meant to create awareness of the concept and to guide librarians on how they can get involved in the discussions both physically and/ or remotely.

### **7.1. Guiding open ended questions**

- A.** Are you familiar with IG and especially with IFLA's position on IG?

- B. Have you ever been part of any group, professional or social, that discussed or shared experiences on issues of IG in your local context?
- C. Do you ever educate users through local discussion forums on thematic issues on the use of internet?
- D. Have you ever participated in any online forums that shared any information or guides on the use of internet?

All but two of the participating librarians were not aware of IGF. The former president of the Botswana Library Association and the current president were well informed on both IG and IGF. As noted in earlier discussion, the former president had participated in the 2013 IGF in Kenya and had shared a report in which she called for librarians to take an active role in discussion on IG (Radijeng & Kaddu 2013). This participant also noted that she covered issues of IG in most of seminars and presentations that she did on copyright issues as her area of interest. She however added that IG had not been dealt with in depth at BLA level or any forum locally.

Although the current president of BLA, who is also the Head of Department in the school of library and information studies at the University of Botswana, did not indicate if he had attended any IGF, he noted that he engaged in discussions on the subject in varied platforms. The participant was well versed on the concept and even brought in a discussion on the multi-stakeholder debate. He reported that the school offered a course that covered emerging themes in both librarianship and archives. The course, which was offered at post graduate level, engaged the students in seminars related to a broad range of topics, including IG.

The just noted participant also indicated that he engaged with researchers at the faculty level in their publications on both Internet usage and e-government developments as they evolved in Botswana. He and five other members of the staff in the department had contributed chapters in a book, **Digital Access and E-Government: Perspectives from Developing and Emerging Countries**. This book is a compilation of chapters that share experiences and observations on how information laws impact or relate to e-government. This was the only participant who was involved in online discussions on the use of internet for development.

Out of the remaining eight participants, two said that although they did not understand IG, they were involved in online discussions through platforms offered by the providers of the consolidated electronic databases that their institutions subscribe to. The other two participants also expressed thoughts that related IG to e-governance. These participants however openly declared that they were not too sure how the two concepts related. Three participants said that although they were not too sure of the concept, the name denoted policies. All the eight participants who regarded themselves as not informed about the concept also indicated that they were not too sure if they had been part of any forum that discussed IG because they did not understand what it was. One of them even declared that she thought it was not the domain of librarians but instead of government and the security agents. This

specific participant, who served in a special research library, noted that he served researchers who were working on issues of e-governance.

Five of the participants brought in a discussion on monitoring the use of internet in their libraries. Special reference was made to the use of especially Facebook in academic libraries. These librarians indicated that, according to them, such restricted use of Facebook in the library was more of IG. Two other librarians noted that they only use their own discretion and common sense in restricting or allowing access and usage of the internet in their libraries.

One of the librarians noted that, although she would not consider herself to have engaged in any IG discussions, she had been involved in Open Access best practice information sharing sessions. This participant was currently doing a Masters program in library and information studies at the University of Botswana. She was also aware of the course that was earlier cited by the Head of school of library studies. However she noted that she had not participated in any of the seminars that discussed IG as a thematic issue.

The participant from the Botswana National Library Services (BNLS) also noted that they held workshops that imparted skills to librarians on the use of internet for development. She indicated that IG has never emerged as a topic in any of their training. The participant, however, declared that due to her lack of understanding of the concept she was not in a position to say much about her involvement or the BNLS.

All the participants were keen to engage in IG discussion in the local context. They all found the interview as already creating awareness of an area they needed to be very familiar with.

#### **8. What can reference librarians do?**

- A. Familiarize yourself with the IFLA position on IG.
- B. Engage on issues of IG in your local context and share experiences through the library association.
- C. Educate users through local discussion forums on thematic issues tabled at regional IGF's and channel feed back through the association or shared experiences in conference set ups.
- D. Participate in online forums.

#### **9. CONCLUSION**

Reference librarians in Botswana are not well informed on the concept of IG and how they as librarians can participate. Interestingly, most were not even aware of IFLA's position or relationship with IGFs. There is however a lot of interest and great potential for the professionals to take an active role in IGFs.

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