



## Glòria Pérez-Salmerón: Libraries Must Change their Mindset

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*Interview with Véronique Heurtematte, Livres Hebdo*

*President of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) since last August, the Spaniard Glòria Pérez-Salmerón is pushing to reinforce the visibility of libraries and convince politicians that they are essential, faced with the great changes in our societies.*

Glòria Pérez Salmerón, president of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) since August 2017, was in France on 11 and 12 January in order to take part in the events organised in Lyon and Paris by IFLA's New Professionals group and the French International Committee for Libraries and Documentation (CFIBD), the French branch of the international federation, on the subject of the future of librarianship. This librarian, originally from Barcelona, who was director of the Spanish National Library from 2010 to 2013, has placed at the heart of her mission the role of libraries in major social issues, and in particular in the challenges posed by the digital society. To this end, she is continuing the significant advocacy efforts of IFLA to ensure that access to information is at the heart of the seventeen goals of the UN's 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. During her mandate, under the slogan '*global vision, local impact*', IFLA will develop a new strategic plan, for the first time based on a broad consultative process. In an interview in Paris, the President set out to *Livres Hebdo*, with a palpable conviction and enthusiasm, her desire to make IFLA into a federation more open to the world, and to the needs of all of its members.

***Livres Hebdo:*** *What is the biggest challenge for libraries today?*

**Glòria Pérez-Salmerón:** the principal issue for libraries today, and in the years to come, is how to respond to the challenges posed by the digital society. Nowadays, everyone is connected, and can access an immense amount of information online. But a large part of this information is aimed at specialists and is incomprehensible for the general public. Libraries have a fundamental role to play in order to train citizens, and to give them the tools necessary not just to access information, but also to understand and analyse it.

The UN Sustainable Development Agenda foresees that by 2030, all the world's citizens need be educated in this way. We need to link our own action to the Agenda, and show decision-makers that libraries are essential allies in meeting these objectives. They represent a network on institutions in every corner of the world. But to fulfil this potential, we need the right legal frameworks.

***Livres Hebdo:*** *Has IFLA managed to be heard on the copyright reform proposed by the European Commission?*

**Glòria Pérez-Salmerón:** We have worked for a long time to raise awareness of the needs of libraries. It's not easy, but we're making progress. Getting the legal framework right is a fundamental issue for libraries. Publishers claim that the development of digital documentation has not advanced as fast as had been predicted. But even if progress is slow, it's clear that we will, in the coming years, find ourselves in a completely digital environment. In fact, we're already there to a large extent. The copyright laws we have today were designed for printed works. They are outdated, and unsuitable for digital works. We – libraries – want to do our jobs without breaking the law. It's essential if we are to reach the goal set out in the 2030 Agenda to provide universal access to information. If we don't manage this together – librarians, publishers, politicians – to create a new legal framework,

offering a satisfactory balance between copyright and access to information, we risk facing serious difficulties in the future.

***Livres Hebdo:** What is IFLA doing to meet these objectives?*

**Glòria Pérez-Salmerón:** Last year we launched the Library Map of the World, which makes it possible to see what resources are available for supporting reading, and a major consultation of professionals from around the world, which will allow us to design our strategic plan for the future in a more participatory way. We need leaders in each country to lobby in favour of libraries, and we need more and more librarians themselves to carry out advocacy activities. This is why meetings such as the ones organised this month in Lyon and Paris are very important. They allow professionals and future professionals to feel themselves part of a community.

***Livres Hebdo:** Are the issues the same for developing countries, particularly in Africa, which often lack resources for their libraries?*

**Glòria Pérez-Salmerón:** Yes, IFLA's Global vision is relevant for all the regions of the world. We are organising workshops in all countries, and finding new members, especially in Africa, in South America, and in Oceania. In Africa, effectively, library networks are not always sufficiently developed, but everyone has a smartphone in their pocket, and so is connected to the digital society. We are organising, next July, a meeting in Durban to which we have invited the culture ministers of all African countries in order to talk about the opportunities presented by libraries.

***Livres Hebdo:** Has the image of libraries in the minds of politicians and decision-makers changed?*

**Glòria Pérez-Salmerón:** I think that their perception of libraries has changed. Just a few years ago, librarians were stuck in their own world, their own jobs, and that goes for IFLA too. We need to change our mindset. Today, professionals have understood that they are actors not just in their own workplace, but in society as a whole, and must respond to its needs. For the first time at IFLA, we stand together around a global project, and when I discuss this with decision-makers, I have the feeling that they are listening.

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