

News Release

For immediate release
November 15, 2005

Contact
Patricia Breivik
breivikp@bellsouth.net

Contact
Forest Woody Horton, Jr.
f.w.hortonjr@att.net

The Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning

A ten-year old girl on holiday saved over 100 lives in Phuket, Thailand, when the recent tsunami hit because she was information literate. Details of this story were shared during a High Level Colloquium on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning, held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria, Egypt on 6-9 November 2005. Tilly Smith of Oxshott, England, having researched tsunamis two weeks prior to her holiday in geography class, recognized the early warning signs of an imminent tsunami, and took action. Because of her ability to use and apply the knowledge she had learned, the beach was cleared and no lives were lost.¹

Building upon a report entitled "*The Prague Declaration: Towards an Information Literate Society*," issued by the first international Information Literacy Meeting of Experts, held in Prague, the Czech Republic in late 2003, the High Level Colloquium organizers invited 30 participants from 17 countries, representing six major geographic regions, to assess the progress and opportunities for implementation of the report's recommendations, with the goal of empowering citizens across the globe to be information literate - - to be like Tilly.

In today's complex world/environment, the participants affirmed that information literacy is not just a necessity, but a basic human right that promotes social inclusion in all nations. They urged governments and intergovernmental organizations to pursue policies and programs to promote information literacy and lifelong learning because they are essential to the development of the Information Society. These basic rights, principles and goals are embodied in a single page document entitled "*Beacons of the Information Society: The Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning*" (attached).

In the words of Mr. AbdelAziz Abid, UNESCO senior programme specialist of the Information Society Division, "Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments and to all levels of education, while recognizing the disparities in learning styles and in the nature and development of literacy in different countries."

The Colloquium delegates recommended that the information literacy and lifelong learning initiatives should now be advanced further using the format of a three-stage series of meetings, beginning first with regional meetings that will be held in roughly the same concurrent timeframe within each of the six major geographic areas - - Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America, beginning in 2006 and extending into 2007.

¹ <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=1279799&page=2>

These meetings will serve as a forum to encourage each country within a region to share its information literacy and lifelong learning ideas, approaches and strategies, and reach a consensus on the most promising approaches in the region and its sub-regions.

Building upon the results and outcomes of the regional meetings, a series of thematic meetings will next be held, concentrating in depth on particular socioeconomic sectors such as Business and Economic Development, Education and Learning, Health and Human Services, and Governance and Citizenship. Finally, the results and outcomes of the various sector meetings will then be consolidated and analyzed for possible worldwide consensus and prioritizing. The regional and thematic/sector meetings will then be followed by the third stage - - a major World Congress on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning, which will be held in 2008.

The full report of the Alexandria Colloquium, with a complete set of detailed recommendations will be available in February 2006. Requests for further information and for a copy of the report can be made to the above contacts. The attached *Alexandria Proclamation* is immediately available.

The three main organizers of the High Level Colloquium were:

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which is the international lead agency for education, the sciences, culture and communication. For more information, go to www.unesco.org
- The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), which is the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users. For more information, go to www.ifla.org
- The National Forum on Information Literacy (NFIL), which is an umbrella group of over 90 organizations from education, business, government and community service, plus international organizations. All are committed to the empowerment of individuals in today's information society. Combined membership in the Forum member organizations totals over 5,000,000. For more information, go to www.infolit.org

In addition to the three main sponsors, contributions to the meeting were made by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (www.bibalex.org) and its Director, Dr. Ismail Serageldin, Diane and Lee Brandenburg of California, USA, Information Today, Inc., and the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) (www.nclis.gov).