

9 Library Advocacy at National and Regional Level

The purpose of this chapter is to shed some light on library advocacy at the national and regional levels, where policy-making has its own rules. As it will not be possible to discuss all countries and not even all types of government (see chapter 3.3.1) in their way of policymaking, this chapter will highlight the limited framework of library advocacy at the national level and outline some advocacy approaches. “The democratic nature of actual states and communities is inevitably a matter of degree” (Lagerspetz 2014), as is the nature of the state in non-democratic, authoritarian states where librarians seek to assert their interests and those of their users. In addition to national activities, some examples of regional political decision-making levels are added, as in some countries these levels play a more prominent role in library development.

9.1 Political Decision-Making and Issues for Library Advocacy at National Level

In a parliamentary democracy, the parliament plays a crucial role in legislation and many other aspects that affect libraries, but also in a presidential form of government. For all legal matters affecting libraries, from a library law to copyright, the parliament is the decision-making body. In non-democratic, authoritarian states, there may be a representative body of elected or appointed politicians to make decisions by acclamation, however, all laws are prepared in commissions or working groups and a relevant ministry is involved at every stage. Figure 28 below provides an overview of policy making at the national level in many countries.

Structure for Policy Making at National Level

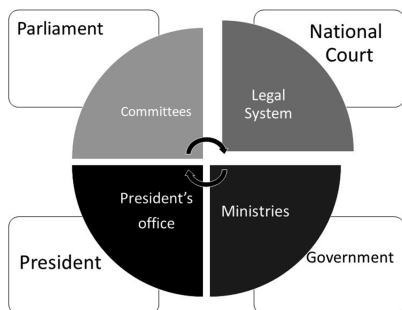


Fig. 28: Structure for Policy Making at National Level. By Claudia Lux.

The work of the members of parliament or the representative body and the discussions in the committees mark the important decision-making levels. Elected members of parliament vote on legislation for their parties and support government policy through majority decisions. However, in democracies and even in some authoritarian states, parliamentarians or representatives have various opportunities to make recommendations before the vote. In most countries, the government tries to make a balanced decision to get broad support from different groups in society.

Ministries and commissions invite representatives of groups to explain their proposals and gain support. However, libraries are not often on the agenda. Therefore, library associations need to be proactive and build relationships with decision-makers and ministerial staff early on to prepare for these decisions. The normal business of the parliament takes place in the various committees and subcommittees, and again this varies from country to country. Library associations need to monitor these developments so as not to miss planned decisions, laws and regulations that directly affect libraries. This is particularly the case with copyright and some other cultural and educational issues. Consultations take place before legislation is passed in almost all countries, and library associations need to be taken into account, which will only happen if they are in regular contact with policymakers. No one will invite libraries without a strong and active library association or at least a strong national librarian asking for an invitation. Advocating around these committees needs to be extended to the relevant and concerned ministries. The standing committees relevant to libraries and some subcommittees, which should be regularly monitored by library associations, deal with issues such as:

- culture/media
- education/research/technology
- law/consumer protection
- digital agenda
- urban development and municipalities
- SDG topics
- construction, housing

There may be other issues in some countries, and this is also an important task to find out if there are any laws or regulations in preparation that have an impact on libraries. Part of the monitoring process is to be informed when relevant issues are being discussed and decided at an intergovernmental level, such as the EU.

Early coordination with library associations at intergovernmental level is necessary for library related issues such as copyright and digital rights. Again, li-

libraries could be included in the strategies of all countries as places accessible to all with internet access, while restrictive measures can be countered by close contacts with influential politicians and key net policy organisations. For committees on education, the successful role of libraries in information literacy is on the agenda. A committee on national research is also crucial for the participation of academic libraries in the discussion on the direction of research data infrastructures. Another example of possible topics for library advocacy is a political discussion for an urban development strategy, as city libraries can be positioned as frequency generators and a third place in central city districts. For advocacy in all these aspects, library associations need different partners with whom to align themselves.

There are good examples of successful advocating of parliament. In the early 1990s, a member of parliament in Finland mentioned in a speech that public library services should be paid for, which the Finnish Library Association immediately condemned. There is a library law in Finland that says that library services are free, and this should not be changed, and the association started a petition to the parliament, collecting half a million signatures against the idea, while all newspapers wrote articles about charging for library services. Since then, no one has mentioned library fees in parliament (Haavisto 2022). As the library situation in Finland is well developed and there has been a library law for a long time, the situation for libraries in Finland is often seen as perfect, but the reality is different. “Some people say that in Finland there is no need for advocacy for libraries. This is not true, for libraries one has to advocate everywhere” (Haavisto 2022).

Only in a few countries are libraries on the national political agenda. Objectively speaking, it is usually the case today that libraries are not mentioned at all, nor are they on the agenda of any national political committee or ministry. Library advocacy needs to fundamentally change this situation. However, it is also clear that libraries can be considered in many policy areas (see chapter 6). When advocating, it is always important to check whether the challenges can be dealt with at national level or whether they are more a matter for regional or local decision-making. The initiatives of library associations, which have good contacts with politicians in political parties, in parliament and in some ministries to promote advocacy for libraries, should be emphasised.

9.2 Opportunities for National Advocacy – an Example from Germany

The following example from Germany is not universal but shows how libraries can make an impression on committees and get their issues on the agenda. In the German parliament, a rare way of preparing recommendations is to convene a

study commission or Enquete Commission, which is set up to thoroughly analyse, discuss and make recommendations on a broad topic that is currently important for society. The study commission is set up by a decision of the German Bundestag and all parties are proportionally represented, with an equal number of experts proposed by the parties invited to take part in the discussion. In this way, the parliamentarians develop bills or recommendations to the government on an informed basis, with MPs asserting that a study commission gives them time to think through issues thoroughly, which is not always possible in the hectic day-to-day work of a committee. A study commission also offers lobbyists many opportunities to influence the various hearings and to contact the various experts. In the last ten years, there have been two Enquete Commissions of particular relevance to libraries, one on “Culture in Germany” (2003–2007) and one on “The Internet and Digital Society” (2010–2013), in which library associations were able to participate. As associations, they are recognised by the government as representing the interests of librarians and library users. In addition, some librarians are selected through personal connections to the party members of the Enquete Commission.

The Enquete Commission on Culture in Germany has looked at many aspects of culture, including libraries as part of the cultural field of literature. The German Library Association and representatives of other library associations and libraries were thus invited to a hearing, with the feedback from the hearing incredibly positive. What was special about the success of the library association in spring 2005? It was the most unified statement of all the cultural sectors. This was also confirmed by other members of the Enquete Commission. In its report, the Study Commission stated that libraries need to be given more recognition and mentioned the important role that libraries play in society. In the recommendations for action in the chapter “Public Libraries”, the final report recommended the following five points:

1. To regulate the tasks and financing of public libraries in library laws and thereby make public libraries a compulsory task.
2. Create a library development plan.
3. Consider establishing a library development agency.
4. Integrating libraries into educational concepts and assigning them to educational institutions in terms of budget.
5. Set up a funding program for the physical rescue and digitization of written cultural assets threatened with decay (Deutscher Bundestag 2007, 132).

More than 15 years later, library laws or regulations have been passed in eight of the 16 German Länder, but public libraries are not compulsory anywhere. Library development plans exist in several states, and the Library Competence Network at the German Library Association, while not yet a library development agency,

has many elements of such an agency, especially through the allocation of funds for all libraries. In addition, the integration of libraries into educational concepts and their allocation to educational institutions for budgetary purposes has only occurred in individual cases at the municipal level. However, the funding programme for the physical rescue and digitisation of written cultural heritage in danger of decay has been set up in an institution called the Coordination Centre for the Preservation of Written Cultural Heritage, *Koordinierungsstelle für die Erhaltung des schriftlichen Kulturguts* (KEK 2021). Although only the fifth point, the KEK has been fully implemented, and thus the result of the study commission for libraries is considered to be extremely successful according to the spokesperson for the German Cultural Council, who attended the meeting of experts.

With this success comes the question of how to prepare such advocacy on a common basis for libraries in the study commission. Here is a brief synopsis of how the advocacy for libraries in “Culture in Germany” proceeded:

1. The basis for advocacy was laid with the information that such a study commission on culture had been set up, which was followed by direct contact with members of the Enquete Commission and appointments for meetings. Previous acquaintance through other cultural bodies or contacts with members of different parties played a role, and the chairwoman of the German Library Association and other board members of the library associations contacted members of the Enquete Commission from different parties, then holding discussions and providing information about the situation to find out if and when libraries should be consulted. But relationships were also formed in the other direction. As members of the commission were keen to have specific information and to know more than their rivals from the other parties, they tried to find out what libraries needed. One member actively contacted the library association, while other commissioners contacted the public library in their constituency and asked about the current situation. By providing information through the association, the main demands could be disseminated widely and at an early stage.

2. The questionnaire sent by the study commission before the hearing was answered in consultation with the other members of the German Library Association Board, each representing a specific group of libraries. The questionnaire completed by the German Library Association was then sent to all those who were now known to be invited to the hearing, so that they could compare their answers with it or copy the association's answers. Some of them were members of the German Library Association, and it was agreed with them who would speak on which issues; they were asked to talk about certain priorities of the library association in addition to their own points. An hour before the hearing, a meeting was organised

on the spot to which everyone was invited and asked whether they agreed in principle with the answers the German Library Association has given, or at least could tolerate them, and were asked not to speak openly against them. The demands of the German Library Association were again justified and those who had a different opinion on one point or another were asked not to express this in a confrontational way. Of course, not all those invited came to this preparatory meeting, because some experts had been specially invited by their representative and did not want to be monopolised by the German Library Association. Nevertheless, these experts were contacted shortly before the meeting and asked to support a common approach. During the committee hearing, care was taken to ensure that everyone had enough time to present their points of view and that the chairwoman of the German Library Association took a step back and did not dictate the discussion.

3. Immediately after the hearing, two MPs approached the library experts and congratulated them on their clear and consistent testimony. Later they said that other experts had attacked and argued with each other and that everyone wanted to stand out, however, the MPs could not do anything about it. Only if the invited representatives were of the same opinion would the study commission continue to deal with these points and formulate final recommendations.

4. In the months following the hearing, further individual contacts were made with various members of the committee, and the concept paper “Bibliothek 2007” (Library 2007), which emphasised the role of libraries in education, was again sent to all members. This booklet was distributed to all members of parliament at federal and state level, but the early elections in 2005 brought new members to the Enquete Commission, including a member of the German Library Association’s advisory board. This was important evidence of the importance of such links with individual MPs.

5. Following the publication of the final report, members of the inquiry published reports on the findings in various library journals. In one commentary, a member of parliament summarised the successes for libraries very positively (Kurth 2009). The German Cultural Council also published articles by individual commission members on the various parts of the Study Commission’s report, several of which focused on libraries (Deutscher Bundestag 2007).

Although this description of advocacy is very brief, the most important conclusion for advocacy at national level is to make personal contacts and to have a consistent positive image; this, together with good arguments, is the basis for success, and it has become abundantly clear that this can be ideally prepared by the library association.

Based on this experience, library participation in the subsequent Enquiry Commission on the Internet and the Digital Society also went very well. Through the contacts made during the first Enquiry Commission, various members of parliament were informed by their colleagues about the importance of the Internet for libraries and how it affected their services. Library associations had already been invited to some of the parties' preparatory meetings, on which basis participation in some of the hearings could be secured. With the new brochure "Media and information literacy – always with libraries and information institutions", which will be distributed to all members of parliament, the BID tried to emphasise the important role of libraries in this area (BID 2011). Several heads of libraries and their associations were consulted as experts, with the representative of the Legal Commission of the German Library Association reporting some successes for libraries in the Enquete Commission. "Libraries were a topic in the project groups 'Education and Research', 'Democracy and State', 'Culture, Media and Public Relations', 'Media Literacy' and 'Copyright'" (Upmeier 2013). The challenges for libraries in relation to copyright can also be presented, and libraries were mentioned 13 times in this report. Even more often in "Education and Research", it is mentioned that school and university libraries should be able to acquire more digital media and that electronic media should be offered like other media (Upmeier 2013).

It has been shown that library associations can influence committees such as study commissions through selected members, with a basis created for being heard in other parliamentary bodies and ministries. Again, what is important for democracies is even more important for non-democratic countries: advocacy for libraries will only work if personal contacts with decision-makers can be established, and they must be kept alive over a longer period of time.

Finally, there was a new aspect: in 2012, the hearings of the Enquete Commission "Internet and Digital Society" were broadcast online for the first time, and citizens were able to comment on them. The representative of the German Library Association found this remarkably interesting from a library policy point of view; for him, it was a change in classic advocacy, away from political advice via associations towards more direct citizen participation (Upmeier 2013). With such a development, the activation of members of associations, friends and users of libraries has and will become much more important in the future (see chapter 14).

9.3 Library Advocacy and the Head of State

In 2010, the Lithuanian Library Association did not believe in their power and complained that neither politicians nor sponsors supported their cause. After an intensive BSLA training in 2011, the Lithuanian Library Association became highly

successful in advocacy and approached the President of Lithuania, not only as a patron of Library Week, but also as a strong advocate for the country's libraries (Jaskūnienė and Samavičienė 2012), with the leading librarians able to meet her in person and get more support for libraries. In 2016, as the patron of the Year of Libraries, the President of Lithuania thanked the librarians for their passion for books and library visitors and presented them with individual diplomas of recognition, while the Chair of the Culture Committee of the Lithuanian Parliament, the Seimas, noted that culture would be one of the top priorities of the new government programme and the activities of the Seimas (Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania 2016). All events with the President are published in the press, and the Lithuanian Library Association has developed new public relations that can be used to further put libraries on the agenda. It is excellent when the high-level meeting is followed by discussions at the political decision-making level, and laws and regulations for libraries are under way. Today, the list of the Ministry of Culture shows all the Ministry's responsibilities towards libraries, such as with the Strategic Directions of Library Development 2016–2022 (Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania 2021).

How do you get to the President's office? The best way is through a personal contact. Not everyone can be as lucky as some members of the Malaysian Library Association years ago who were married to senior politicians and were able to lobby for library issues every day at home – with great success for the support of libraries in Malaysia. But very often the National Library of a country may have a connection with the President's office. If this is not the case, or not possible at the moment, there are many more options, with examples on various American websites on “how to write a letter to the president”, which can be used in many countries, if the different human culture of addressing people is carefully considered. One of the best explanations is written by Jasper, a US advocacy expert, who explains the formal aspects as well as each paragraph of the letter (Jasper 2021). To summarise, the most important formal aspect is to write the same letter in different ways, by e-mail, by post (see chapter 17.18), by person and through the relevant ministry, and to understand that a president will not see the letter as all letters are processed by staff in a database. In terms of content, Jasper talks about the “ask”, the topic the president is being asked to address, which is written immediately after a brief introduction of the letter's signatories. In some countries this may need to be more tactful and not so direct. In the following paragraph, the letter writer must explain why the President needs to do something for libraries, using examples, stories or scientific quotes. At the end of the letter there is a summary and a thank you, followed by the typical phrases and signatures. It is important that there is only one “ask” and that the letter is kept to one page (Jasper 2021).

In Germany, librarians met the Federal President in 2007. Loose contact with the Office of the Federal President developed into a first detailed discussion between the then Chairwoman of the German Library Association and a civil servant who organised a so-called Culture Breakfast for the then Federal President Horst Köhler. This time the topic was libraries (Lülfing 2007), with representatives of all library associations and types of libraries, from former East and West Germany, from voluntary public libraries to large academic libraries, quickly appointed. One characteristic was particularly important for all: the librarians were to present their work positively, with commitment and point out shortcomings, but not complain or be reproachful. On the day, the President was impressed by the librarians' commitment and, after listening, immediately asked if there were any problems and then promised to support the libraries. As the President had no direct executive influence in Germany, the librarians asked him to include libraries in his programme of visits whenever possible, to show more appreciation for their work. Two places were suggested: Weimar, to see the Duchess Anna Amalia Library reopen after a fire, and Brilon, to see for himself the children's library work of the Brilon Municipal Library. The President kept his promise to visit these two libraries within a year; in February 2008, he visited the reading promotion activities, the summer reading club and the book babies for children in Brilon, an extraordinary event for the small library and an endorsement of its educational role in the town.

A few months earlier, on the occasion of the reopening of the Herzogin-Anna-Amalia Library in Weimar, the President gave a remarkable speech for libraries and librarians (Köhler 2007). As is sometimes the case, the President's Office asked for input for the speech in order to present the situation of libraries correctly. The speech mentioned all the main advocacy issues, from information literacy to the lack of a library law. The paeans to librarians in the President's speech, however, were all penned by the President himself, with the speech immediately encouraging the then Minister President of Thuringia to initiate the first modern library law in Germany. In this respect, the librarians' breakfast meeting with the President was highly effective politically.

One thing is clear about advocating at this level: a friendly breakfast meeting can win an influential partner for the good cause of libraries by the way librarians present their own situation, namely positively and with strong commitment. Library associations must take two steps: first, they must contact the right person in the office, who has to be convinced that libraries have more to offer the president; and second, they must get to the president and present a convincing case together. This example shows that, with a few exceptions, lawsuits and complaints have no place in library advocacy; they are secondary. The most important attitude is a professional, enthusiastic and committed presentation of the

library's activities and services to society in order to build a positive relationship with the president. This will build trust so that the President's commitment to libraries will have a positive impact and be recognised by the community.

Another point to mention is that librarians who advocate on behalf of the library association at a high political level should be aware that their own library is well positioned in the profession and in the association. This increases their credibility (Tise 2022).

Especially in smaller countries it is not so difficult to reach royal families, presidents, chancellors or ministers to support libraries if libraries or library associations offer a public platform. It is always nice for politicians to be seen with children reading or with students studying in a library. When a president or minister supports an event, the news agencies and television are there, which is extremely helpful for the library cause. However, most presidents or chancellors are only in office for a certain period and are often unable to follow up on what librarians and information professionals are asking for. After an election or a change of government a new person comes in and it is a new challenge for the library association to reach out to the top again. Therefore, a stable contact with the middle level administrators who remain in their offices is the best guarantee of success.

9.4 Library Advocacy and the National Level of Administration

While the President and other political leaders represent a very abstract level of policy-making, in relation to ministries there are many opportunities for registered associations and their representatives to make contacts and inform ministries of what libraries need. It is sometimes possible to get greetings or welcome speeches from different levels of government at library conferences, however, it is certainly much harder to persuade ministers of a sitting government to commit themselves to libraries than it is to persuade a president, because they must be even more careful about the responsibilities between ministries and sometimes even between regional and local governments. They can therefore only act in their own clearly defined policy areas. The first step in library advocacy is to understand the different responsibilities of different ministries and how to align library needs. Even within a ministry, a department can only work on an issue for which it is responsible and must coordinate with other departments or ministries on any issue under its influence, which can be very bureaucratic if no ministry wants to take responsibility for an issue. The library association needs to be aware of this division of political power, including aspects of the minister's political party or ethical background. As is so often the case, libraries' areas of activity are divided between different ministries or departments, so the interests of li-

libraries must and can be represented in all ministries and departments. There is a lot to know before presenting to the ministry how libraries can support particular policy issues, and it is necessary to illustrate the wide range of library activities, from working with migrants to children's libraries, from information literacy for students and scientists to research data collection. As described earlier (see chapter 6), libraries are not just part of the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Culture. Other ministries may also be relevant, and the interaction between different ministries may be crucial to the success of library advocacy at this level.

When librarians and information professionals need to advocate at the highest political level, they need to be aware of the many administrators who are there to keep everyone away from the highest political level, but it is important to work with them and convince them of the importance of the message.

A few successful examples from this broad field of advocacy are highlighted here. To mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the German government launched a funding programme called “Neustart Kultur”, open to all cultural institutions. The success of the library association's advocacy was demonstrated in August 2021 when the Minister of State for Culture visited the Humboldt Library in Berlin Reinickendorf, where she said it was a good sign that the German Library Association's *WissensWandel* digitisation programme had been so well received that it was being extended for a second time; in this way, more libraries and archives were able to offer attractive digital services and thus facilitate access to knowledge and culture for citizens (Bezirksamt Reinickendorf 2021). Earlier, in March 2021, the Federal Minister of Education and Research had announced the National Reading Pact with the Reading Foundation, in which the German Library Association was a partner (BMBF 2021), so as for financial support from different ministries to help libraries.

In Singapore, the National Library Board is considering changing its advocacy strategy from an institutional to a national goal, having realised that it is difficult to advocate for the transformation of libraries and archives in the same way repeatedly. You can transform, but the projects do not say much when you talk about transforming the institution; the government will simply recognise that the management is transforming the libraries and archives as it has done all the years before. The new way now is not so much to transform libraries and archives again, but to present to the government a new idea that creates a national ecosystem of content providers (Tan 2022). It is becoming increasingly important not to be an advocate for institutions, but for specific goals, and the Singapore project shows this very well at the national level.

In countries with smaller governments, the path to the top is shorter, even for the SDGs. Advocacy for the SDGs at the national level has been quite successful in Zimbabwe, where librarians had participated in IFLA's IAP activities and

had been trained in advocacy on the role of access to information, libraries in the UN Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals; they knew exactly what they were advocating for. Although the UN was promoting a voluntary review process for the SDGs, “libraries in Zimbabwe needed to approach the ministry proactively, building on contracts made previously at the 2020 African Regional Forum for Sustainable Development” (IFLA 2021g). The Regional Forum is an intergovernmental platform convened by various organisations, including the African Union Commission and the United Nations, to review progress and formulate key messages to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union’s Agenda 2063.

The Library Association of Zimbabwe is very engaged with the SDGs and wants to do something about it, with libraries submitting documents and giving examples of how libraries are contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. “In Zimbabwe also, the coordinating ministry was a new contact for the library association. Thanks to this engagement, the association has been able to create new synergies and receive key new information” (IFLA 2021g). As a result of their advocacy for the SDGs, libraries were included in Zimbabwe’s report, which celebrates the association’s work on open data. Because IFLA was able to support librarians from Zimbabwe to attend the African Regional Development Forum, they were able to meet their government and were praised for their work on the SDGs: “There is also evidence of closer links with governments, with officials in Zimbabwe . . . underlining how much they welcome library engagement and looking forward to further cooperation” (IFLA 2021g). This advocacy success is extremely useful in building a stronger advocacy line between the library association and the government, and has been a success for the Zimbabwe Library Association and for IFLA. “It is a surprise when in the end something comes out that looks like what you have been working for” (Wyber 2022).

From the experience of how libraries can participate in the voluntary review process of the Social Development Goals in some countries, IFLA has drawn some lessons for the future:

Lessons for the future

Clearly, the diversity in the processes implemented by governments means that libraries in each country will need to do the detective work necessary to find how best to engage.

Sometimes this will be a case of making sure that you are checking the right websites or are on the right mailing lists. Other times, it will be a case of ensuring that you are well known in general in the NGO community.

Nonetheless, making the effort to identify and get to know the team responsible in general for implementing the SDGs clearly helps in general, not least in ensuring that even if there isn't a public call for contributions, you will not be trying to engage as strangers.

A second lesson is around the value of having evidence and case studies already prepared in order to submit. This work isn't just helpful at the time of a Voluntary National Review but can also support your advocacy at other moments.

Finally, as seen in Iraq and Zimbabwe in particular, working around the SDGs – and in particular VNRs – can be a great way to expand networks, ensuring that a wider range of ministries know about the work of libraries, and so – ideally – can be ready to support our institutions when decisions are made (IFLA 2021g).

Of all the ministries, the Ministry of Justice is the most important for library advocacy, as copyright in the digital age has been an issue for all countries and all libraries for years, with a constant flow of new or amended copyright legislation to which libraries must respond quickly and consistently.

In Germany, the consultation period is short and library associations must react immediately. As with COVID-19 in the summer of 2021, the Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection is conducting a public consultation to evaluate two sections of the Copyright Act; comments on the points listed in the consultation letter can be submitted in just six weeks. At the same time, the positive evaluation is coupled with clear demands for further improvements to the Copyright Act regarding access. An alliance of organisations has been formed to advocate for improvements for scholarly institutions and libraries, which is a joint advocating effort by the organisations involved in library policy (see chapter 3.3). When it comes to copyright, one cannot be inattentive for a moment, and all libraries and academic institutions understand this clearly. The opportunity to lobby for the good cause of study, scholarship and research is particularly clear in the case of copyright. It is not always successful, but it is even more important to join forces with others to form a larger advocacy group and to push through small improvements first.

In support of all libraries in the world, IFLA's Advisory Board on Copyright and Legal Matters monitors and comments on the current international copyright debate at WIPO, but as the African Union (see chapter 8.3) shows, new issues are emerging everywhere and library associations need to be alert to what is happening with the legal issues in their country, including trade issues related to copyright.

In Colombia there was an exceedingly difficult copyright situation for libraries, with the copyright law written in such a way that libraries were not allowed to lend books; in fact it was forbidden. But the Colombian state funds the libraries

and the libraries were lending books so, because of the way the law was drafted, this was a problem. The director of the Karisma Foundation, a foundation that promotes access to culture and information, started to fight against this copyright law in 2011 with strong arguments including: how can the Colombian state have a law that makes what libraries do illegal, like piracy, with all the money the state puts into libraries? How can the state finance libraries to lend books when the copyright law has no exceptions or limitations for libraries? At first, the Ministry's answer was simple: "The judge will not put you in prison" (Botero 2023). But these arguments from the ministry could not last for long, because the negative effects of the copyright law on Colombian libraries were broad and diverse, limiting the purpose of library practice (Ramírez-Ordóñez et.al. 2016). Advocacy was intensified, and there were several submissions to Congress in favour of exceptions and limitations to the copyright law. Arguments were sharpened, such as: something that is illegal should not remain illegal, and it is not legal to turn the law into something that relies only on the voluntary decision of a judge (Botero 2023).

Colombian libraries, once they understood the problem, were very well connected with IFLA, which was doing a lot of advocacy on copyright in Latin America, and the Colombian librarians became exceptionally good advocates and were provided with good arguments by the Karisma Foundation. What is also important in cases like this is that it is better not to push for changes in the law unless there is some kind of consensus that the change is needed – otherwise Botero's advice is that it will not happen. You must convince the group, the person negotiating on the other side. Since the director of the Karisma Foundation, who had negotiated the copyright law for a long time, was seen as more radical, the libraries started from a more moderate position, and were only successful with the lending part. When the law went to Congress, it was prepared by the Ministerial Copyright Office, because the public representative and the public libraries were no longer allowed to participate directly. When it went through Congress, it was not a complete success, because the digital part was completely determined by the rightsholders. However, after seven years, the librarians were able to win over the opposition of the rightsholders by showing them the real problems. In 2018, Colombian libraries and their supporters were able to change the most outrageous parts of the copyright law in Colombia, and lending was no longer illegal (Botero 2023).

Another example comes from the Foreign Office in Germany, a ministry that seems far removed from any responsibility for libraries, apart from its large and well-known special ministerial library. But it is clear that foreign cultural policy cannot be complete without libraries. Library advocacy can also receive support

from the Foreign Office at special moments, for travel to international library conferences and for invitations to library study groups from abroad. In pursuing a request for support, library advocacy must be flexible and may follow the political interests of the Ministry if the ethical principles of librarians are not compromised.

In 2006, when the then IFLA President-elect spoke of cooperation and support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the context of “Putting Libraries on the Agenda”, she was primarily referring to support for travel as part of her IFLA Presidency, but it quickly became clear that this is not possible. The State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office mentioned in the conversation that they could alternatively support a conference by providing a room and interpreters and could support invitations to people who would come from the three current priority areas of German foreign policy at the time, namely Eastern Europe, Asia and the Islamic world. In order to support the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this sense and to create a win-win situation, the library side immediately came up with the idea of inviting international librarians and their political superiors from these regions together. A concept was thus drawn up and the Federal Foreign Office subsequently supported three presidential meetings of the IFLA President in 2007, 2008 and 2009, each with a group from Eastern Europe, Asia and the Islamic world, under the heading “Libraries on the Agenda” (Maier 2009). For IFLA, this marked the beginning of the series of Presidential Meetings, but more importantly for foreign librarians, it allowed the possibility of inviting their political superiors and bring library policy issues closer to them. The fact that the event took place in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin, according to the foreign librarians’ superiors in their home countries, generated particular respect. On the one hand, the interest of the Foreign Office in the regions addressed can be satisfied while, on the other hand, grants can be generated for the IFLA presidency and, above all, the invited guests can lobby for their libraries in their own countries, as they travel to the IFLA Presidential Meeting in Berlin together with their political decision-makers. In the end, this was particularly successful for the Romanian library representative.

9.5 Library Advocacy at the Regional Level of a Country

This chapter provides a brief overview of library advocacy at the regional or second level of government in a country. There are countries with a strong regional administrative division and countries where the regions have less political power in a more unitary state; library associations need to consider the political structure of the country in detail before starting active advocacy. The aim of the description is

rather to show selected examples of structures and responsibilities and thus to sharpen the view of the possibilities of advocacy at the regional level of a country. Library advocacy in the regions of this type of administrative division must consider national law in all aspects affecting libraries and their users. However, this does not mean that there is no advocacy at the regional level, as the administration has a certain framework for decision-making. It is therefore important for all libraries at regional level to have good relations with the regional government.

As explained above (see chapter 5.2), some countries have a federal system, which means that in some areas, such as education and culture, key decisions for libraries are usually made at regional level. In a federal state like Germany, librarians and information professionals need to know exactly which level of government is responsible for laws and regulations concerning libraries and their services. Due to the federal structure of Germany, the regional level of political decision-making is basically responsible for culture, education and science and is relatively independent, while sometimes they take joint decisions themselves in the Conference of all Federal Ministers of Education and Culture, which they are obliged to abide by. In principle, they are responsible for state and regional libraries and university libraries, and indirectly for the special libraries of state institutions such as museums, archives or state research institutes. Public libraries are traditionally the responsibility of the municipalities and districts, with similar principles in the cooperation between the *Länder* and the districts and municipalities, and different procedures in the regions. In all regions, municipal libraries can receive some form of funding from the state, but in some regions, they must meet certain eligibility criteria, have a certain number of opening hours and have professional staff. For this reason, the federal states support specialised bodies that advise public libraries, as well as library consortia or digitisation.

Regarding a library law in Germany, the federal states have different positions. Library laws are passed at regional level, not at national level. Some laws are copied from region to region, others are quite different, while many states do not support a library law at all; it all depends on the political constellation in the region. So far, all regions in Germany have rejected a library law that would make public libraries a compulsory responsibility of the municipalities, even though this is supported at the national level (see chapter 9.2). Librarians argue that a professionally run library in any community can reduce many other problems, support education and help people in lifelong learning. Consistent advocacy by the German Library Association in all regions is a key to success. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the UN Agenda 2030 are well suited to support these arguments, as they can be used to illustrate the positive role of libraries for society in a practical way (see chapter 7.2).

Advocacy through campaigning is usually more focused on a large city or region, as this is easier to manage, however, sometimes it is a nationwide activity or focused on a region. One advocacy issue that has developed into a successful national and regional advocacy campaign in many countries is reading. In the Netherlands and Germany, reading foundations have been set up and libraries are a partner in the programme. Reading as one of the key values of libraries is an immensely powerful issue at all political levels and the reading campaigns as a marketing and advocacy tool for libraries draw attention to libraries and their activities. In 2006, the Austrian Library Association took the initiative for a major reading campaign, with the participation of the Austrian President. The Austrian Library Association is responsible for organisation and coordination, and the Ministry of Art and Culture is the main sponsor, with the campaign called *Österreich liest. Treffpunkt Bibliothek – Austria reads. Meeting point library*. In 2023, a week in October was once again reserved for this nationwide event, which has been running for 17 years.

In China, the activities of a national reading campaign started in the city of Dongguan. With the opening of the new library in 2005, a reading festival was launched in the library and the city, with reading promotion activities organised to promote the library. A few years later, a more influential campaign called the Nationwide Annual Reading Forum started, organised by the Reading Promotion Committee of the China Library Association, with the chief librarian of Dongguan Library as its director. The forum is held in a different province of China each year, with librarians working with partners such as bookstores and coffee shops and reaching out to celebrities from all occupations, including basketball, film and music, while the involvement of celebrities and political figures is also helping to turn the reading campaign into an advocacy tool for libraries. To demonstrate the digital literacy of libraries, Dongguan Library started with digital reading for the city, which was soon extended to the whole country, and then developed a Digital Reading Gate in a project called “Read by QR codes, Books shared by Cities” as shown in Figure 29. The QR code is used as a simple channel for free mobile access to the library’s digital resources, with the aim of the project to rebuild the image of the library as a gateway to knowledge in the digital age and to build a door to the library’s digital reading for people in the villages (Li 2022). All events have a great impact on the public and are organised to promote reading and libraries. Such national and regional campaigns are primarily a marketing tool for libraries, but they can open the doors to further advocacy opportunities with policymakers at a national and regional level.



Fig. 29: Read by QR Codes, Books Shared by Cities' The Reading Campaign with Celebrities in China_ Poster Dongguan Library.

9.6 Summary of Library Advocacy at National and Regional Level

The examples of library advocacy at the national level are only a selection of the possibilities available at this political level in terms of funding for libraries and influencing legislation. Constantly changing policies will lead to new constellations of contacts for libraries. With a good knowledge of successful advocacy, this is a challenge that can be met. The examples are intended to encourage libraries or library associations to find a way, based on their own needs, to engage with policy-makers at national level to raise awareness of libraries among decision-makers and demand good decisions for libraries and their users. At the same time, librarians and information professionals are not petitioners; they have something to offer politicians and can support or even facilitate desired solutions.

Library advocacy at the regional level is geared at the specific areas of the federal ministries in the different countries with such a governmental organisation. The federal states as well as the regional parliaments with the parties repre-

sented there and the regional governments are the main target of the advocacy of the regional library associations if they exist. Academic, public and school libraries may be affected by policy-making at this level while library advocacy at the regional level, where there is no independent decision-making power, tends to focus on the national level or on the individual regional structure responsible for units such as regional libraries. Advocacy campaigns can very well be launched at national or regional level, as the different reading campaigns show.