IFLA engages fifty countries to promote libraries’ role in sustainable development

As a part of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) International Advocacy Program (IAP), 50 countries are already participating in the initiative to get libraries involved in planning and implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To initiate the IAP, over 100 participants from 50 countries attended 4 workshops. The participants signed an agreement to raise awareness and reach out to policy makers to ensure libraries are represented in the UN 2030 agenda. By engaging community advocates, IFLA intends to raise awareness about libraries and their impact on sustainable development in each of the 50 countries.
“This has never been done before in the library community,” states Gerald Leitner, IFLA secretary general. “These participants have committed to be strong advocates in their countries to bring libraries into the UN 2030 conversation, and IFLA will be there to support them along the way.”

The next steps for IFLA will be a call for funding proposals to support activities to raise awareness, workshops to attract representatives from more countries, and a Global Assembly to share progress and make further plans.

Read the full story (http://www.ifla.org/node/11077).

Universal health coverage tracked by WHO data portal

The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched a data portal that shows progress toward universal health coverage (UHC) in WHO’s 194 member states. The portal conveys each country’s status in terms of both service provision and information. The next step in development of the portal will include the addition of data depicting impacts of health care costs on household budgets.

“My country seeking to achieve UHC must be able to measure it,” states Margaret Chan, WHO director-general. “It shows where governments need to act to strengthen their health systems and protect people from potentially devastating effects of health care costs.”

To achieve UHC globally by 2030 is one of the current United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to improving population health, achievement of the goal would aid in the goals of reducing poverty and economic growth.

“All countries can make progress towards UHC, even at low spending levels,” says Marie-Paule Kieny, WHO’s assistant director-general for health systems and innovation.

Read the full story (http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2016/portal-universal-health/en/).

Public libraries enhance access to community health services

Although many partnerships exist between public libraries and health care organizations, Coventry Central Library in England goes the extra mile to meet their patrons’ health needs. One initiative ensures that those who visit the library on Thursdays find themselves in the presence of an accessible and inviting sexual health clinic kiosk. Integrating the clinic into the library removes the stigma and embarrassment that users may experience when seeking out services at the clinic’s established location.

Other medical services that patrons can access in the library include a mental health walk-in service, breastfeeding support, and routine over-age-forty health checks—all free of charge. The library organizes a wellness day for women on International Women’s Day, which features a Zumba class and writing workshop.

The library also partners with a cancer support charity. Five libraries in the system established information points to provide pamphlets and CDs in several languages, and library staff have been trained in effective listening and effective referrals of patrons with more complex information needs.

Also in effect is a book prescription program for mental health and dementia. Patrons’ health care providers write a prescription for a particular book, and patrons go to the library to sign it out. Prescribed books are kept in their own sections and monitored closely by staff to ensure availability of titles.

“Libraries are about the general health and well-being of the population,” says Peter Barnett, head of libraries, advice, health and information service. “We’re valuable as a neutral space that people don’t have any great hang-ups about. We can reach different people that the [National Health Service] NHS won’t through its own locations.”

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