

The International Conference on Books in a Globalizing World

Held on 1 and 2 March 2013

in Shenzhen at the invitation of its Municipal Government

With 36 participants from 10 countries, including senior representatives from UNESCO.

Recognizing that the City of Shenzhen is a most appropriate venue as it hosts a diverse culture and ethnic backgrounds, demonstrating the soft power of culture in general to drive present and future development; and that the City of Shenzhen has promoted through culture-oriented policies and strong emphasis on education at all levels a literate society through programmes such as the annual reading months, virtual libraries, modern bookstores, reading events and festivals, as well as support to special programmes for disadvantaged segments of population;

Noting also that the City of Shenzhen is home to a vibrant library infrastructure and hosts publishing industries and major private sector IT companies;

Aware that after 30 years of progressive development, the City of Shenzhen has become the “most digitized internet city” in China and ranks first in China for internet facilities, the use of the range of digital technologies, the number of mobile phone citizens and total time usage;

Affirming that books are fundamental vectors for upholding and promoting cultural diversity and that they are building blocks for the emerging knowledge societies and scientific research and collaboration;

Highlighting that books are a fundamental expression of culture, a source of knowledge and a tool to promote mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue as well as intergenerational sharing;

Underlining the tremendous opportunities inherent in new digital applications, including downloadable content from the internet, and the growth of the e-book industry for innovation, which will affect authors, readers, traditional publishing industries, libraries, traditional as well as on-line bookshops in the process improving efficiency, lowering costs and enhancing marketing opportunities;

Further recognizing that Governments have also supported and subsidized the development of digital opportunities, underpinning efforts to promote large-scale initiatives to foster social harmony and progress;

Furthermore emphasizing that technological innovation and convergence of technologies will profoundly affect the future development of the book industry which will also impact visions and strategies for each city's development and their engagement with citizens;

Noting that the print supply industry has been transformed by new techniques, media and methods for reading;

Recognizing that due to the e-book revolution people have overcome thought barriers and are now better able to express their opinions in the digital realm, in the process enjoying more freedom to read and express ideas than at any other time;

Further recognizing that the use of the Internet allows people access to abundant information and the freedom to have their voices heard on issues such as public affairs and issues of personal concern, which has opened up and reinforced possibilities for free speech;

Note with satisfaction that Shenzhen has the highest Internet penetration rate in China and use of social media by its citizen is encouraged.

Inspired by the need for a global reflection on the impact of globalization on books, the book industry and book reading habits as a result of the increasing availability of e-books and other online learning, research and literary tools;

At the conclusion of the Conference, the participants adopted the **Shenzhen Declaration on the Role of Books in the 21st Century**, which contains various recommendations addressed, as appropriate, to the main groups of stakeholders, namely librarians, publishers and booksellers as well as readers, writers, Governments, universities and the private sector.

The **Shenzhen Declaration** reads as follows:

We, the participants in the Shenzhen International Conference on the Challenges to the Book Industries in a Globalizing World, held on 1 and 2 March 2013 at the invitation of the Municipality of Shenzhen,

Express our sincere appreciation to the Municipality of Shenzhen for its generous hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for the Conference;

Commend the leaders of the Municipality and all organizers of the International Conference for their vision and initiative to launch an international reflection on the consequences of the digital revolution and transition on the book and publishing industries, authors, the IT industry, press and the media as well as consumers and readers;

Recall the Vancouver Declaration adopted by the International Conference on the "Memory of the World in the

Digital Age: Digitization and Preservation”, held in September 2012;

Invites the major stakeholders to consider adopting and implementing the following recommendations:

We express our conviction of the need for such international, regional and national reflections through regular conferences and other international gatherings and on-line discussions and **call on** governments, international organizations, cities, private sector corporations, media companies and civil society organizations to engage in a series of forums, conferences, round tables and other interactive deliberations **in order to address the implications of the unstoppable rise of e-books, to work towards a new balance between e-books and paper books and thereby to create a global environment conducive to international cooperation helping to overcome the increasing knowledge divide and book divide between “haves” and “have-nots” within and among countries;**

We recognize the growth in the role of new technologies and social networks, and of their role in the formation and distribution of information as an unprecedented phenomenon in human civilizations;

We acknowledge that the rise of the e-book will be unstoppable and that this will need the formulation of new business models for all actors and stakeholders and bring about the transformation of many industries;

We also recognize that there is an urgent need to resolve legal and economic issues regarding the access to and management of digital information and publications;

We call for the urgent development of new legal solutions and approaches as well as the harmonization of existing laws nationally and internationally;

We underline that in order to realize the full potential of the digital book future it is necessary to induce continuous technological innovation on behalf of consumers enabling them to read e-books on a wide variety of personal devices and applications;

We are convinced of the transformative power of the growing digitization of content globally and of the emergence of numerous new business models and platforms, requiring adaptations in existing legal frameworks governing book publishing and printed media;

We perceive the need for a modification in the application and enforcement of the principles of copyright and protection of intellectual property right in the globalizing world of internet;

We are conscious that digitization can also contribute to the preservation of documentary and written heritage by capturing, sharing and making widely accessible such content, preventing the negative impact of excessive handling of precious originals and promoting the migration of content from deteriorating formats to more stable media or carriers;

We suggest that the application of digital strategies for book publications and distribution be accompanied by step-by-step communications to address and recognize the needs of conventional industries;

We call on publishers and publishing houses to better tailor their products to match clients' needs and user conditions;

We encourage the Shenzhen Municipal Government to establish an International Institute on Publishing for exchanging information, providing trainings, enhancing translations and capacity building as well as providing fellowship programmes for all its collaborators;

We also encourage libraries to strengthen and adapt their roles as knowledge brokers in the new e-book and e-reading environment as well as with respect to the impact of the internet;

We foresee that academic libraries will in future be dominated by e-books and **call** for appropriate adjustments in various processes, such as in procurement procedures, legal rules for use of e-content in libraries, flexibility in usage conditions, and the provision of metadata for catalogues;

We urge city and municipal authorities to promote and expand reading activity programmes and facilities at community level for all age groups, thereby contributing to the enjoyment of cultural rights of citizens;

We encourage collaborative productions between e-book and hard copy book publishers, developing also specific and dedicated portals;

We propose that efforts be made to harmonize international licensing agreements for e-books in order to avoid unwarranted restrictions and disparities;

We endorse open access arrangements and channels coupled with new revenue-sharing models and **we recognize** that this will lead to the need for harmonization of copyright rules at the global level and for protection of ownership rights;

We encourage all stakeholders in the book Industry to develop training, particularly in e-publishing and related collaboration;

We also draw attention to the fact that the arrival of new media had changed profoundly the nature of the music industries and that this process may continue with the emergence of digital markets;

We call on Governments, municipal authorities, international organizations, foundations, the media, universities and the private sector as well as civil society to intensify their collaboration with and support of developing countries in developing their book and publishing industries and facilitating access to books and knowledge through e-books and other digital means, including digital libraries.