



African Library & Information Associations & Institutions

African Library and Information Associations and Institutions (AfLIA) Position on Public Lending Right

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Introduction

The African Library and Information Associations and Institutions (AfLIA) is an independent continental non-governmental organization (NGO) of library and information associations and institutions which actively pursues the interests of library and information associations, library and information services, librarians, information workers and the communities that they serve and also provides a platform to discuss issues and further the cause of the library and information sector in Africa. AfLIA promotes libraries and information centres as vital institutions that enhance people's lives through equitable access to knowledge, information and innovative services and supports the principles of freedom of access to information.

AfLIA's Position on Public Lending Right

AfLIA does not support the concept of a 'public lending right' (PLR) as the scheme introduces the requirement of 'pay to lend', whereby a fee must be paid for material lent by libraries from their collections. PLR is not only a threat to free and equitable access to information and the services provided by libraries, but also to scholarship.

In Africa, PLR is a new concept, and there are currently no established PLR schemes in operation, and no country is obliged to introduce PLR under international treaties or conventions.

PLR raises particular challenges in Africa because the majority of countries are low income. PLR undermines government efforts to expand free primary and secondary education across the continent. It would mean diverting scarce resources from activities such as collection development and promotion of reading and literacy, to pay authors (the majority of whom are likely to be from foreign countries), resulting in an outflow of funds from African countries.

Libraries are a critical part of Africa's commitment to free public education, and at the heart of book and reading strategies but many countries struggle to fund them, with many relying on foreign book donations.

AfLIA recognises the fact that authors are often not well rewarded for their literary efforts and believes that authors should be properly compensated for their work. By investing in libraries, governments in Africa are investing in authors, literacy, education and development.

In particular, governments can support local creators by allocating a budget for public libraries to purchase works by local authors that would directly support authors and publishers.