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Via e-mail: information@uis.unesco.org

RE: Comments on the December 2007 Draft UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics

Dear Sir or Madame:

On behalf of the Special Libraries Association (SLA), I write today in overall support of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics' (UIS) process consulting Member States on a new approach to collect internationally comparable statistics on a range of activities related to the production, circulation and use of cultural products in revising the 1986 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics. Specifically I write addressing issues relating to libraries. SLA is a nonprofit global organization for innovative information professionals and their strategic partners. SLA serves more than 11,500 members in more than 60 countries in the information profession, including corporate, academic, and government information specialists.

The December 2007 draft framework does an excellent job in acknowledging that defining culture and scoping the sectoral breadth is problematic and that both economic and social phenomenon must be captured. It takes a supply chain approach and therefore incorporates creation, production, dissemination, exhibition, consumption and archiving.

With regard to libraries and archives, research into existing frameworks for cultural sector measurement found that ten (10) out of fourteen (14) cultural statistical frameworks include libraries and archives. There is however, a significant variation in how the libraries and archives 'activity' is aggregated into higher level groupings or domains by those 10 frameworks. There is also significant variation in how frequently data is collected for the cultural surveys, with Australia and Finland as the only countries funded for regular data collection.

In the production and consumption groupings, the indicators related to the labor market would provide data relevant to libraries and archives. These include employment levels, occupations,

income, age, gender, education, ethnicity, etc. The indicators related to expenditure would also provide valuable data relevant to libraries and archives.

The research for the framework determined that museums, archives and libraries are a core component of the 'cultural and natural heritage' domain. It is considered that "these institutions have considerable political influence regarding cultural policy and need to be able to 'see themselves' within any revised framework."

SLA believes that the defining occupations require more than a single code. Defining occupations within the framework sees librarians, archivists and curators as a single code which may not be detailed enough to facilitate meaningful representation of those employed by museums, libraries and archives.

The UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics framework provides a means of leveraging existing statistical processes to encourage consistent data capture to facilitate international benchmarking. While it is acknowledged that many countries will not be able to capture a comprehensive range of data, it has been developed in such a way that smaller data collections will still remain comparable with others in many cases.

The lack of global statistics that reflect libraries and those who work in them is sadly lacking, particularly in developing countries. This revised framework is clearly relevant to how libraries, library services and members of the library and information profession globally are measured. As such, the Special Libraries Association supports the further development and use of statistical frameworks such as this, particularly where they enable international comparisons that can be used for advocacy, service provision and support purposes.

We look forward to the results of these efforts, and commend UNESCO Institute for Statistics for its diligent efforts and movement forward in this area. We respect and are appreciative of the extensive work UIS has committed to this undertaking.

Respectfully,



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