

INFORMATION

National Forum on Information Literacy

August 31, 2006

Re: Petition PE 902

Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament,
Parliamentary HQ,
Edinburgh,
Scotland,
EH 99 1SP.

Dear Sir or Madame,

The National Forum on Information Literacy recently learned of Petition PE 902 before the Scottish Parliament which is sponsored by Dr. John Crawford. It concerns the importance of ensuring the national school curriculum recognize the importance of information literacy as a key lifelong learning skill. **We commend the Scottish Parliament for its attention to this important issue and write in support of the petition.** To explain our support, let me highlight some key points in the emergence of information literacy as a basic human right and the role of the Forum has played.

In 1989 the American Library Association Presidential Committee Final Report on Information Literacy, which was developed by national leaders in education, information science and business, was released. The report called for a restructuring of the learning process. It stated: *"Such a learning process would actively involve students in the process of knowing when they have a need for information, identifying information needed to address a given problem or issue, finding needed information, evaluating the information, organizing the information and using the information effectively to address the problem or issue at*

hand.” It further stated: “Such a restructuring of the learning process will not only enhance the critical thinking skills of students but will also empower them for lifelong learning and the effective performance of professional and civic responsibilities.”

Given the importance of this challenge, the report recommended the formation of a national coalition to promote information literacy. Today the Forum is a broadly-based umbrella organization of both national and international organizations held together by a common commitment to people empowerment in today’s Information Society. (See attached list of membership, and for more information on the Forum see www.infolit.org.)

Over the years since then, many countries have adopted information literacy standards at both the school and university levels with corresponding assessment tools, and a large international body of literature and best practice now exists. Efforts continue.

This coming October the National Forum on Information Literacy is partnering with the Educational Testing Services, the National Education Association, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and others to offer an “information literacy” summit meeting for U.S. policy makers. Its primary purpose is to further understanding of information literacy’s role in American competitiveness, student and worker readiness to engage in an ever evolving, dynamic global economy.

At the international level, UNESCO has co-sponsored with the Forum two international leadership conferences on information literacy in (2003) Prague, The Czech Republic, and in (2005) Alexandria, Egypt. Emerging from these events is a commitment to information literacy as a human right and as an essential element in lifelong learning. (Reports and declarations from both events are available through the Forum website.)

Eventually, however, it is up to each country in its own way to ensure that its youth are prepared for lifelong learning in a world that is overloaded with information—both true and untrue, both up-to-date and antiquated, both relevant and tangential.

Should the Parliament take favorable action on this Petition PE 902, Scotland will be one of the early adopters of national policy on this very important topic. Such an action will be a model for other countries but—most importantly of all—it will enhance the future of generations of Scottish citizens and leaders.

Sincerely,

Lana W. Jackman, PhD
Sharon Gray Weiner

Lana W. Jackman and Sharon Gray Weiner
Co-chairs
National Forum on Information Literacy.