



Graduate Women
International (GWI)

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GWI Calls for Increased Support for Public Libraries on World Book and Copyright Day

Geneva, Switzerland, 23 April 2024 – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) dedicates 23 April annually to World Book and Copyright Day (WBCD) to promote the pleasure of reading books, publishing, and copyrighting. As advocates for 105 years for literacy and education, Graduate Women International (GWI) highlights WBCD public libraries as vital institutions for providing equitable access to books and reading spaces yet also voices concern for limited access to public libraries by millions of women and girls.

Public libraries, with their diverse array of tangible and digital resources, are designed to serve all community members. However, the reality is that women and girls, particularly those from marginalized communities, rural areas, low-income households, and regions lacking adequate infrastructure, often face significant barriers to accessing these crucial resources. On WBCD, GWI aims to leverage its global network of graduate women to advocate for increased attention to the public, private, corporate, and governmental funding required for public library access. By addressing barriers such as geography, socioeconomic status, cultural norms, and funding, we can significantly improve access to public libraries and reduce the educational obstacles women and girls face.

Public libraries are not just repositories of books; they are sanctuaries of knowledge, equality, and opportunity. As we commemorate WBCD, let us recommit ourselves to the mission of ensuring that every woman and girl, regardless of circumstance, has unfettered access to these invaluable resources.," says GWI President Patrice Wellesley-Cole.

Public libraries offer girls a space to connect beyond school, regardless of income. GWI promotes this inclusivity by ensuring lifelong learning is accessible to all, exemplified by initiatives like the Nepal Association of University Women's Reading Room, established in 1996 in central Kathmandu. It ensures women and girls have equal access to resources, allowing the community to read, gather, and share. Books and publications on women's issues and career development are distributed. For children with limited mobility due to injury or illness that prevents their access to educational materials, the Samoan Association of Women Graduates in 2008 opened a children's library in the Tupua Tamasese Meaole Hospital at Motootua, aiming to enhance the literacy level of children with reading, writing, and educational games.

WBCD celebrates the importance of books and reading. GWI calls on governments to integrate public libraries into planning and development to meet community information needs.

About GWI: GWI is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with a presence in over 60 countries. Founded in 1919, GWI is the leading girls' and women's global organization advocating for women's rights, equality, and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels. GWI is in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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