



Egypt

PUBLIC ACCESS LANDSCAPE STUDY SUMMARY



Overview

Egypt has relatively low needs with regard to improving public access to information and communication technologies, and is expected to make steady gains toward this goal over the coming years. Some of the factors influencing this progress include a public accustomed to accessing information through alternate means (such as mobile phones), high illiteracy rates, a lack of relevant content, and a high gender bias in non-urban areas of the country.

PUBLIC ACCES LANDSCAPE	
Challenges ahead	Steady gains
Needs	Low
Needs (rank)	18/25
Readiness	Low
Readiness (rank)	17/25

Findings

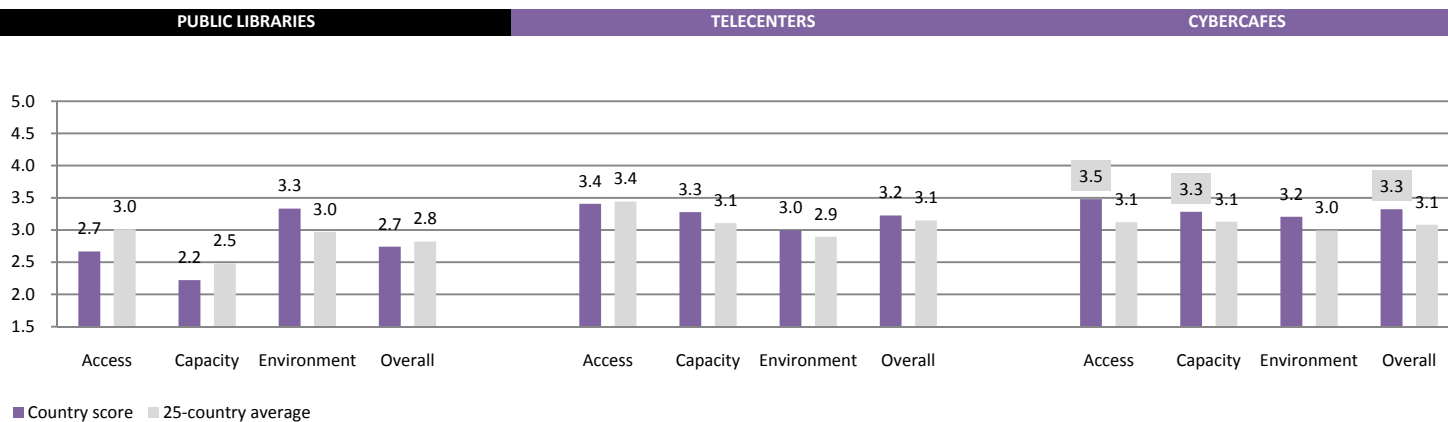
During the decade prior to this study, Egypt's government invested heavily in creating a physical infrastructure that encourages economic growth and invites foreign direct investment. In that respect, the government correspondingly has invested heavily in information and technological developments and has achieved an excellent return on that investment. As a key aspect of these advancements, the government has embraced an e-government program to help transform Egypt into an information-based society.

Given this favorable political impetus, four key venues for public access to information stand out and were examined during this study: public libraries, academic libraries, IT clubs, and cybercafés. These four venues cover the spectrum of public access in Egypt and are perceived to have the potential to expand and more effectively meet the information needs of the public.

The Egyptian political sector has demonstrated a high degree of support for public access venues, and that support serves as a favorable foundation for the success of these venues. The support of Egypt's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology for IT clubs, and for public access in general, are reflected in the rapidly increasing number new venues that have appeared to serve the public. The diversity of supporting agencies affects the wide range of offerings and quality of services.

- Despite this strong support from the government for public access to technology-based information and communication venues, a vast majority of the population still most commonly accesses information through mass media and other means, especially through television and by word of mouth. This point is particularly evident among lower-income and underserved people, rural people, and those who live in smaller communities far removed from urban centers.
- Public phone shops have become quite important in the way individuals communicate, although the increasing emergence of mobile phones is having a huge effect in decreasing the role these shops play.

ACE Scores



Shaded data points are outside standard deviation for 25-country set
 See the last page for country-specific definitions of these venues
 See the last page for a definition of the ACE scoring framework

Venue Distributions

	ALL PUBLIC ACCESS			PUBLIC LIBRARIES			TELECENTERS			CYBERCAFES			OTHER VENUES*		
	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median
VENUES	13,752	10,017	5,489	1,127	1,111	1,062	1,742	1,273	366	10,194	8,693	3,225	689	398	46
number with ICT	12,368	9,802	5,122	225	349	96	1,742	1,149	257	10,194	8,507	3,251	207	146	13
% with ICT	90%	98%	87%	20%	31%	20%	100%	90%	100%	100%	98%	100%	30%	37%	92%
% OF PUBLIC VENUES	100%	100%	100%	8%	11%	20%	13%	12%	11%	74%	73%	67%	5%	4%	1%
POP. PER VENUE ('000)	5	8	5	66	93	37	43	205	68	7	52	9	108	419	103
with ICT ('000)	6	15	6	329	2,093	208	43	242	119	7	62	10	359	1,354	198

*See the last page for country-specific definitions of these venues. For this country, "other venues" refers to academic libraries.
 Data points are missing for some measures in some countries, which can result in oddities when comparing rows of data (for instance, the average number of venues with ICT appears high compared to the average number of venues). For a complete overview of comparative country data, please see the summary paper for this study.

User Profiles

		PUBLIC LIBRARIES				TELECENTERS				CYBERCAFES			
		Urban	25-country average	Non-urban	25-country average	Urban	25-country average	Non-urban	25-country average	Urban	25-country average	Non-urban	25-country average
INCOME	Low income	50%	28%	30%	35%	0%	26%	10%	24%	8%	26%	7%	24%
	Medium income	40%	54%	55%	46%	80%	56%	70%	45%	44%	56%	63%	45%
	High income	10%	7%	15%	6%	20%	9%	20%	4%	48%	9%	30%	4%
EDUCATION	No formal education	0%	3%	0%	2%	1%	5%	1%	6%	0%	5%	0%	6%
	Only elementary	80%	16%	10%	21%	7%	14%	19%	13%	7%	14%	42%	13%
	Up to high school	10%	50%	60%	36%	35%	37%	20%	32%	23%	37%	21%	32%
	College or university	10%	28%	30%	19%	57%	40%	60%	28%	70%	40%	37%	28%
AGE	14 and under	35%	12%	10%	15%	2%	9%	15%	14%	15%	9%	15%	14%
	15-35	60%	72%	85%	51%	88%	74%	45%	57%	65%	74%	85%	57%
	36-60	5%	12%	30%	23%	9%	12%	35%	8%	20%	12%	0%	8%
	61 and over	0%	2%	5%	2%	1%	0%	5%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
GENDER	% female	55%	53%	45%	49%	45%	39%	20%	39%	20%	39%	10%	39%

Percentages may not add up to 100% in all cases
 See the last page for country-specific definitions of these venues
 Data collected through interviews conducted by research teams. See country reports for details with regard to methodology, locations, timing, and data collection issues.

- The lack of appropriate sustainability models also has had a negative effect on the quality of service among the different venues, and may be due in part to internal venue management issues.
- Capacity building programs have been widely introduced in Egypt, and have mainly targeted young adults and youth. While these programs overall have increased the general awareness of ICTs in various segments of the society, high illiteracy rates and the limited awareness of the importance of digital ICTs have contributed to the slow pace of technology penetration, especially in the low-income sector.
- Content that is relevant, user-generated, and particularly focused on local needs is quite limited, which contributes to the inadequate adoption of ICTs across all segments of Egyptian society.
- The hours of venue operation, the expense of transportation, and the cost of using the venue services all contribute to limiting access to the venues. While these limitations are seen to be changing in some urban locations (in part because of changes in the management of some public access venues), the changes have not appeared to a significant degree in underserved, low-income, and rural areas.
- What are commonly considered to be the two most important factors affecting access to public information venues are the educational level and gender of the potential users. The gender constraint is a reflection of cultural issues that restrict females from accessing certain types of venues, such as cybercafés, especially during late hours. The strong influence ICTs and libraries have on education has also driven venue operators to focus on those individuals still in school and on adapting capacity building programs.

Recommendations

The favorable legal and regulatory environment surrounding public access to information venues flows from the strong support of the nation's government. Foreign investment in the telecommunications sector has increased, aids the development of infrastructure, and contributes to the growth of landline and mobile services although penetration remains low. By increasing the public awareness of the role of ICTs in public access to information and in using ICTs as a tool to access that information, several success factors and recommendations have emerged from this study.

- **Create collaborating networks among the public access venues**, with the goal of helping to increase knowledge sharing among the venues. The networking process will result in a better application of resources, creation of support networks, and creation of a broader set of services relevant to local communities. These changes, in turn will help to create community-relevant content and the development of sustainability models.
- **Increase the capacity of operators to work as information intermediaries**. Operators should be able to bridge the gap between the information sources and the users and supply relevant information to the public by understanding their requirements and by seeking the appropriate knowledge. The operators and intermediaries should also be able to aggregate the community's needs and requirements to drive creation of more relevant content.
- **Develop practical methods to create appropriate content**. Then, present those methods so they become a focus to support further development of public access venues, both through systematic methods, such as governmental portals and digitization programs, and through innovative means to understand and seek community-relevant knowledge.
- **Increase the amount of digital content in libraries and online**, and develop ways to share and integrate basic library activities with new technologies at public access venues. When this is accomplished, it will increase the relevance of and accessibility to libraries.

Geography & Economy

Egypt is renowned for having developed a complex graphics-based communication system thousands of years ago. Today, Egypt is a modern technologically advanced nation with a strong stable political and economic base and fits well among the neighboring countries both in Africa and throughout the Middle East.

The rapidly growing population has been estimated at 80 million. Importantly, the limited amount of arable land and the country's huge dependence on the Nile River have always exerted an enormous influence on the population, and that is no less true now, and they continue to cause a high degree of stress on the people and on the country's resources.

COUNTRY PROFILE	
Total population* (millions)	74.1
Urban population* (millions)	31.9
Literacy (%)	56
E-readiness	4.26
Gini coefficient	0.34

*World Bank 2006 data
NA=not available

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About this study

CIS's Public Access Landscape Study examined how people around the world access and use information and computers in public settings such as libraries, telecenters, and cybercafes. Understanding public access is particularly important in developing countries where there is often limited private access to information and communication technologies (ICTs).

This study covered a carefully-selected sample of 25 developing countries containing over 250,000 public access settings. Local research teams surveyed over 25,000 people and conducted interviews and focus groups in order to develop a detailed picture of the public access ICT landscape in each country. CIS collected, interpreted, and analyzed these detailed county-level results, and also conducted cross-country comparative analyses to uncover common themes, challenges and opportunities.

The goal of this work is to help strengthen public access to information and ICTs around the world.

This project was conducted in two phases. During the first phase, country-based research teams prepared draft reports describing the information access landscape, presented a national assessment, and compiled a preliminary set of recommendations. In the second phase, teams identified the principal locations where people seek information: public libraries, cybercafes, telecenters, and other locations (such as private and religious libraries).

Local research teams used a combination of research methods to: (1) observe how people access information; (2) conduct surveys in information venues where they interviewed operators and users; and (3) perform secondary research and analysis of existing reports and documents using both local and international sources. Teams combined site visits and interviews to review the physical infrastructure and human resources of a variety of venues, and to determine the information content, service usage patterns, communication, and knowledge development. Additionally, teams examined the effects of environmental factors such as government policies, geography, and ethnic and linguistic differences.

Definitions

ACE scoring framework: Developed by CIS based on a modified bridges.org Real Access framework. The scale goes from zero to five, with 5 being the best possible score. ACE scores are calculated by evaluating dozens of variables having to do with ICT access, capacity and environment in public access ICT venues. "Access" includes variables such as accessibility, suitability, affordability, and the availability of technology; "capacity" includes training, relevant content and services, social appropriation, and collaboration capacity; and "environment" includes socio-cultural factors, popular support, political will, and a country's legal and regulatory framework.

Challenges ahead (from table on front page): Estimates based on combinations of ACE scores indicating difficulty in improving country's public access to ICT. From the fewest challenges to most, categories are: quick wins, steady gains, slow gains, and significant.

CIS: University of Washington Center for Information & Society (CIS)

Cybercafés: For-profit venues that provide communities with access to ICTs.

E-readiness: The ability to use ICT for economic development, as determined by measures of connectivity and technology infrastructure, business environment, social and cultural environment, legal environment, government policy and vision, and consumer and business adoption. E-readiness is scored on a scale from 1 to 10. In 2008, the global e-readiness score was 6.4, with the highest levels in North America and the lowest in Africa and Asia.

Gini coefficient: Measures the inequality of income distribution. A low coefficient indicates more equal income distribution, while a high Gini coefficient indicates more unequal distribution. The global average is around 0.6; the US gini is around 0.45.

ICTs: Information and communication technologies (especially computers and the Internet).

IT Clubs: Not-for-profit venues backed by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT). A telecenter model that aims to provide citizens with access to digital ICTs, and provide ICT as a tool for development.

Needs & Readiness indexes (from table on front page): The needs index is comprised of three indicators: inequality, ICT usage and ICT cost. The readiness index is also comprised of three indicators: politics, skills and ICT infrastructure. Proxies are used for all indicators. See "Information Needs & Watering Holes" on the CIS Landscape Study website (www.cis.washington.edu/landscape) for a more detailed discussion of these indexes and proxies.

NGO: Non-governmental organization

Non-urban: Commonly labeled a rural area, but definitions of rural or periurban vary by country.

Public libraries: Generally accessible and affordable to all citizens; mostly administered through local governments with little ICT access.

Specialized and Academic libraries: Public libraries that serve a specific audience in a particular area of interest; university and research students are the most common users.

Telecenters: See IT Clubs.

Front photo: Internet users at the Library of Alexandria. Photo courtesy of Emily Kornblut.