# Argentina

**PUBLIC ACCESS LANDSCAPE STUDY SUMMARY**

## Overview

Argentina places a high value on incorporating technology into daily life. Increasing numbers of people use or are interested in using ICT services to fulfill their information and communication needs. The country appears to be an extremely favorable landscape for developing and implementing policies and strategies to increase public access to information, and to create and disseminate content with both local and national interest. Argentina had the highest ACE scores of all countries in this study.

| PUBLIC ACCES LANDSCAPE | |
|---|---|
| **Challenges ahead** | Quick win |
| **Needs** | Low |
| **Needs** (rank) | 17/25 |
| **Readiness** | Moderate |
| **Readiness** (rank) | 9/25 |

## Findings

Argentina places a high value on incorporating technology into daily life. Increasing numbers of people use or are interested in using ICT services to fulfill their information and communication needs. The country appears to be an extremely favorable landscape for developing and implementing policies and strategies to increase public access to information, and to create and disseminate content with both local and national interest. Argentina had the highest ACE scores of all countries in this study, thanks to a strong network of popular libraries that complements the public library system, a strong penetration of cybercafés, and a significant body of telecenters in both urban and non-urban areas of the country.
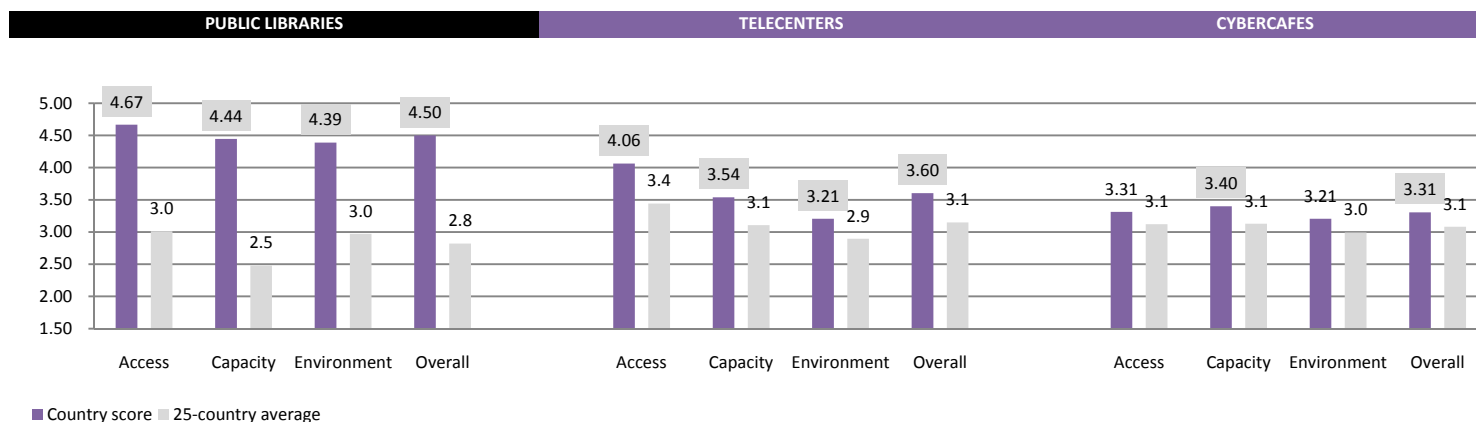
Argentina is experiencing a significant and rapid increase in the penetration of landline and mobile telephony and broadband connections. While Argentina has a relatively advanced information-based society, the general population does not have ready and open access to universal service. The infrastructure and service differ radically among the urban areas and differ even for more among non-urban areas. A striking difference exists between the right to information granted by the Constitution, and the various national, provincial, and local laws and norms. Compounding this contradictory set of circumstances are the mechanisms and actions of the people at the working levels of the marketplace, governmental, civil, and private sectors.

In Argentina it is impossible to separate Public Libraries from Popular Libraries (libraries with non-government funding). Thus, the results for public libraries are not strictly comparable to other countries in this study.

## Recommendations

The research team identified success factors that would improve the capacities of the various venues through digital ICTs and would help to meet the public's information needs in general, especially in underserved communities and remote areas. The most important of these success factors is to improve and extend the services of the public and popular libraries to:

## ACE Scores

| PUBLIC LIBRARIES | TELECENTERS | CYBERCAFES |
|---|---|---|



**PUBLIC LIBRARIES:** Access 4.67 / 3.0; Capacity 4.44 / 2.5; Environment 4.39 / 3.0; Overall 4.50 / 2.8
**TELECENTERS:** Access 4.06 / 3.4; Capacity 3.54 / 3.1; Environment 3.21 / 2.9; Overall 3.60 / 3.1
**CYBERCAFES:** Access 3.31 / 3.1; Capacity 3.40 / 3.1; Environment 3.21 / 3.0; Overall 3.31 / 3.1

■ Country score  ■ 25-country average

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** | 21,177 | 10,017 | 5,489 | 2,186 | 1,111 | 1,062 | 491 | 1,273 | 366 | 18,500 | 8,693 | 3,225 | 0 | 398 | 46 |
| number with ICT | 20,324 | 9,802 | 5,122 | 1,333 | 349 | 96 | 491 | 1,149 | 257 | 18,500 | 8,507 | 3,251 | 0 | 146 | 13 |
| % with ICT | 96% | 98% | 87% | 61% | 31% | 20% | 100% | 90% | 100% | 100% | 98% | 100% | NA | 37% | 92% |
| **% OF PUBLIC VENUES** | 100% | 100% | 100% | 10% | 11% | 20% | 2% | 12% | 11% | 87% | 73% | 67% | 0% | 4% | 1% |
| **POP. PER VENUE ('000)** | 2 | 8 | 5 | 18 | 93 | 37 | 80 | 205 | 68 | 2 | 52 | 9 | NA | 419 | 103 |
| with ICT ('000) | 2 | 15 | 6 | 29 | 2,093 | 208 | 80 | 242 | 119 | 2 | 62 | 10 | NA | 1,354 | 198 |

NA=Not applicable
See the last page for country-specific definitions of venues
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 | ND | 28% | ND | 35% | ND | 26% | ND | 24% | ND | 26% | ND | 24% |
| | Medium income | ND | 54% | ND | 46% | ND | 56% | ND | 45% | ND | 56% | ND | 45% |
| | High income | ND | 7% | ND | 6% | ND | 9% | ND | 4% | ND | 9% | ND | 4% |
| **EDUCATION** | No formal education | ND | 3% | ND | 2% | ND | 5% | ND | 6% | ND | 5% | ND | 6% |
| | Only elementary | ND | 16% | ND | 21% | ND | 14% | ND | 13% | ND | 14% | ND | 13% |
| | Up to high school | ND | 50% | ND | 36% | ND | 37% | ND | 32% | ND | 37% | ND | 32% |
| | College or university | ND | 28% | ND | 19% | ND | 40% | ND | 28% | ND | 40% | ND | 28% |
| **AGE** | 14 and under | ND | 12% | ND | 15% | ND | 9% | ND | 14% | ND | 9% | ND | 14% |
| | 15-35 | ND | 72% | ND | 51% | ND | 74% | ND | 57% | ND | 74% | ND | 57% |
| | 36-60 | ND | 12% | ND | 23% | ND | 12% | ND | 8% | ND | 12% | ND | 8% |
| | 61 and over | ND | 2% | ND | 2% | ND | 0% | ND | 1% | ND | 0% | ND | 1% |
| **GENDER** | % female | ND | 53% | ND | 49% | ND | 39% | ND | 39% | ND | 39% | ND | 39% |

ND=No data
Percentages may not add up to 100% in all cases
See the last page for country-specific definitions of venues
Data collected through interviews conducted by research teams. See country reports for details with regard to methodology, locations, timing, and data collection issues.

- Ensure their strong integration into the communities
- Maintain open access to their services.
- Expand and improve the activities they provide
- Guarantee the continued support they receive from the government, and
- Coordinate and broaden the information and exchange networks they have established.

The long-term sustainability of venues with commercial goals resides in their low cost, their popularity, their capacity to support themselves without outside subsidies, and their ability to upgrade their equipment and software frequently. The success of venues with social goals is linked to their strong understanding of social demands. These venues must focus first on identifying the public's demands, and second, they must serve as information venues as a way to meet those demands. Furthermore, they must accomplish this within any resources they receive from the government, private enterprises, and international organizations.

Based on the results of this study, five key recommendations emerged:

1. **Reduce inequties**: Any policy or initiative involving public access to information should be designed to reduce the inequities caused by gender, socio-economic groups, and territories, and to guarantee the rights of the public to access information freely and use ICTs. It is important to strengthen and reinforce the initiatives, projects, strategies, and policies that are oriented to overcome inequities and to reinforce the ability of the people to participate in the development policies aimed at building an equitable and democratic information-based society.

2. **Encourage and educate users**: Social strategies should encourage and educate users by using training courses and community activities to make the best use of ICTs. This should be accomplished by creating and maintaining collaborative networks to address the issues that interest the users while simultaneously creating and disseminating more relevant content. The use of Web 2.0 applications should be strongly encouraged.

3. **Promote transparency**: Government agencies at all levels should post information online to give citizens greater access to public information and to promote transparency. Public information venues could become privileged places to training citizens to participate in the e-government and in e-democracy processes.

4. **Establish strong cooperative partnerships**: The public, private, and associative sectors should establish strong cooperative partnerships to make optimum use of the human, technological, physical, and financial resources allocated by them to support and enhance public information venues. A multi-stakeholder approach would benefit the implementation and use of public information venues. This could help to establish venues by, encouraging partnerships among the public, private, and associative sectors.

5. **New national digital agenda**: It is relevant to include in any national digital agenda the need to strengthen public information venues through a combination of positive regulations, a balanced territorial distribution, and allocation of fresh resources. Legislation, at national, provincial, and local levels should establish norms and regulations about the infrastructure, equipment, software, and other important operational aspects with the intent to make them more inviting, better serve the users, and make them available to disadvantaged and impaired users. It would be especially advisable to extend the concept of public information access to include the use of cellular telephony because it is already the most popular and widely used form of ICT in Argentina. E-government services and information concerning everyday needs could be transmitted via cell phones at low cost.

## Geography & Economy

Argentina is one of the most advanced and progressive nations in South America with a stable and well-recognized presence in the world community. The economic position is based on agricultural, industrial, commercial, and natural resource interests. The citizens enjoy a relatively high standard of living compared to other Latin American countries, and much of the population considers itself middle class, but 23 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. The educational level is relatively good, especially in urban areas with ready access to public schools and universities.

The population is composed of a wide range of ethnicities, races, and origins. The majority of the population is composed of people who are predominantly of European descent. The most common ethnic groups are Italian and Spaniard.

Argentina is located at the southern extent of South America between the Andes Mountains to the west and the southern Atlantic Ocean on the east. It is the second largest country in South America after Brazil and the eighth largest country in the world.

| COUNTRY PROFILE | |
|---|---|
| **Total population*** (millions) | 39.1 |
| **Urban population*** (millions) | 35.3 |
| **Literacy** (%) | 97 |
| **E-readiness** | 5.40 |
| **Gini** | 0.53 |

*World Bank 2006 data

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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, cybercafés, 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:** Commercial micro enterprise or franchise, where users pay per hour or per minute for Internet usage.

**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).

**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/Popular Libraries:** *Public libraries* created by a government or public institution, and *Popular Libraries*, which are autonomous civil associations created by communities.

**Telecenters:** Private parlours implemented by the main telephone enterprises: Telefónica de Argentina, Telecom Argentina, and IPlan.

**Front photo**: Inside the Buenos Aires public library. Photo courtesy of prospepina (Flickr).