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Utrecht

Living Libraries

The house of the community
around the world

Curated and edited by Diederick Slijkerman
and Ton van Vlimmeren.

Colophon

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Vlimmeren

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Introduction

In December 2020, Ton van Vlimmeren retired as director of the Public Library of Utrecht in The Netherlands. This occasion was an ideal moment to organize a library conference with some of the colleagues in his international network as speakers. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 crisis this was not possible.

Diederick Slijkerman, member of the supervisory board of the Utrecht Public Library, suggested that this retirement was a great opportunity to publish an international collection of articles about the changing role of public libraries in society. Hence the idea to create a book with contributions of some of these colleagues and friends in the network was born.

The working title was 'State of the art in the library world'. It would become a basket full of flowers; everyone who is interested in libraries should be able to find something to their taste. You can be the judge if we succeeded!

In this global overview, we discuss the changing role of public libraries. It starts with Ton van Vlimmeren reflecting on his career. We then give attention to contributions with more focus on the reforming power of libraries across different cultures. We present contributions that elaborate more on the library as a potential hub for democracy. And there

are the contributions where the possibilities of the library as a learning centre are explored. But as libraries are many faceted organizations, it was hard to distinguish them this way, as most of them deal with many different aspects.

One aspect is however central in almost all contributions: the concept of the library as a third place. In 1989 sociologist Ray Oldenburg wrote in *The Great Good Place* about informal public gathering places as a 'third place', alongside the home and workplace. He stressed the importance of these places, e.g. libraries, for a good functioning of civil society, democracy, and civic engagement.¹ Libraries promote social equality, offer opportunities for development and engagement and so people of all ages, social classes and ethnicities feel welcome in the library: a true home for the community.

The Reforming Power of Libraries

The most important theme of public libraries is their ability to reform society. This capacity ranges from the fight against poverty to combating illiteracy. Libraries are embedded within communities, so they are well placed to understand and identify community needs. This is not limited to educational needs; the effects are much broader. Compared to

- 1 **Ray Oldenburg**, *The Great Good Place. Cafés, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts and How They Get You through the Day* (New York 1989).

the levels of Maslow's pyramid of hierarchy, the activities and impact of libraries touch and impact every one of them.

Community libraries in Nepal play an important role as first responders in times of disaster, such as with the 2015 earthquake, as *Sanjana Shrestha* argues in her contribution. For example, the library of the Panauti community set up a child friendly space, where activities like games, dances, and song-singing were held, while it also organized a rally and a commemoration program for those who had died. *Elizabeth Pierre-Louis* demonstrates that after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, social inequalities were accentuated: 60% of the population lives with less than 2.41 US\$ per day. Youth groups started library initiatives in their neighbourhoods, for example, book clubs, literacy classes, tutoring advice. The library program of the Foundation for Knowledge and Liberty (FOKAL) supported by the Open Society Foundation of George Soros, now supports 17 community libraries in Haiti and aims to make books and reading more accessible with an online portal that is searchable on the internet. FOKAL also helped young people facing the problem of public lighting, with offering portable lamps on loan: The Light Library.

In Latin American libraries such as in Colombia, youth is, as *Gonzalo Oyarzún* describes, developing video and

audio productions focused on promoting indigenous rights, land protection, oral traditions, sustainable development, food sovereignty, and how-to live-in harmony with the local ecosystem. Also, in Brazil, libraries are organizing services not only to provide access to literature, culture, and knowledge, but also to encourage debate and creative activities. The Chilean public library allows readers free access to almost 40,000 digital books for all types of audiences and automatic registration. *Spaska Tarandova* shows that in Bulgaria the Global Libraries, a joint initiative of the Bulgarian government and the United Nations Development Program, aims to use libraries for environmental issues, education and the educational integration of children from minority groups. In her contribution *Siobhan O. Reardon* tells how the Culinary Literacy Center (CLC) in Philadelphia in the United States, a city with more than 550,000 adults with low literacy rates, offers programs to learn how to cook using fresh food on a minimal budget and to become more literate at the same time.

Part of the reforming zeal is attention to the changing environment and climate change. *Christine Mackenzie* argues that libraries must play an essential and important role in the discussion of climate change. The Black Summer bushfires in Australia at the beginning of 2020 foreshadow the



The new central housing of the Utrecht Public Library on the Neude.

increasing threat of extreme weather. Climate change affects the natural world and our built environment and cultural heritage. In her introduction about the libraries of the Pacific islands *Allison Dobbie* writes that they are among the world's least developed nations as defined by the United Nations and libraries play an important role in developing strong and reliable internet connections with the world. These islands are grappling with survival in terms of climate change, ocean pollution and fisheries depletion, health, and cultural heritage. International collaboration is very important for them. *Kakaito Kasi* illustrates for Papua New Guinea that since its independence from Australia in 1975, most municipal governments neglected the importance of libraries, but since 2020 the

national government has provided a separate budget so that this paves the way for major developments in setting up new libraries and new library services. *Gaspar Freitas* shows that developing library services in Timor-Leste has been challenging as with any developing nation. The Xanana Gusmao Reading Room, which was founded during its strive for independence in 2000, and UNESCO have recently introduced the digital library system 'Koha' into six libraries and launched Timor-Leste's first web-based catalogue in the national language. *Lorin Pai* writes that Library Services of Fiji has established 31 community libraries across the archipelago and continues to supply reading resources, furniture and training to schools and these libraries. In New Caledonia, *Christophe Augias* writes, the Caledonian Documentary



Kids selling goods and reading at a mobile library in Timor-Leste.

Network was created with centralized library software provided free of charge to libraries. Libraries provide book collections and internet access, and mostly offer online media. They started a program to collect stories of which the texts are then used to create theatrical performances that are programmed within the library network, transforming this unique material into oral form.

As already shown above, public libraries are also very active in combating the 'digital divide': the difference between those who have access to information technology and access to the internet, and those who do not. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation addressed the problem of the growing digital divide from 1997 with their program Global Libraries, on which *Deborah Jacobs and Jessica Dorr* focus. In developing and transitioning countries, the foundation also paid attention to improving infrastructure, for example adding heating to libraries in Eastern Europe and air conditioning to those in Africa. In the Netherlands NBD Biblion developed into a major supporting organisation for libraries, *Nina Nannini* illustrates in her contribution, because it decided to develop and maintain the entire automation system in-house. Above, NBD also specialized in the design and construction of special machines for libraries, bookbinding, and printing companies, while keeping its not-for-profit character.

Libraries as Hub for Democracy

'Freedom, prosperity and the development of society and of individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society. Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information. The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.' This is the IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto from 1994.²

Libraries around the world are fostering democracy and the participation of all people. In times of widespread digital communication and networking, there is an increased need for places of active engagement and face-to-face communication between people, as *Hanne Vogt* considers. Libraries such as the Cologne public library in Germany are becoming the so-called 'third place', alongside the home and workplace. People of all ages, social classes and ethnicities feel welcome. The library is an essential hub for information, innovation and



knowledge transfer. Of prime importance for the successful cohesion of our societies is the ability to check facts based on primary sources and therefore public libraries must, as part of their core mission as information providers, be at the forefront of the fight against 'fake news'. *Suzanne Payette* shows that in the last decade the development of Canadian libraries has kept pace with the growing digital needs of its society and that this development has allowed a democratic access to culture, to information, to literacy and to education. This capacity to adapt has enabled libraries to develop and maintain bonds of trust with their communities. *Ilona Kish* pleads for more advocating by libraries to shift policy and policymaker's direction, and advocates for a societal transformation, one where libraries are at the heart of community-led democracies.

From her experience of transforming the library of Aarhus in Denmark, *Marie Østergård* decided to use the findings to take a deeper dive into how libraries can play an essential part in community development, with democracy development as framework. Her starting point is that democracy is a conversation that allows everybody to participate. Over the past years it has become increasingly clear to her that the issue of libraries as hubs for democracy development could very well be their most essential topic. In general, libraries are considered trust-

worthy, independent, and non-political, and this safe environment might be exactly what people need to enter the democratic conversation. A society needs institutions like libraries helping to create a culture for debates that allows for disagreement without giving way to hate speech or threats. *Basheerhamad Shadrach* shows that when the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, after its successful revitalization program in the US, wanted to promote public library networks around the world, it provided a substantial grant to the Indian Public Library Movement which embarked upon supporting scale-up of services in over hundred libraries, and in developing public policy discourse.

Part of libraries as a hub for democracy is their attention to the people and the perspective of the user. Currently, libraries do not speak about patrons, but about users and members. More and more libraries gravitate towards the perspective of the user, such as in the 'of by for all' model by Nina Simon. This model basically asks: how can we pay more attention to what our users and potential users want? How can we invite them to work and program with us? Is there a demand for kids' summer camps? Well then, why not organise such a thing with them? In the Netherlands, the public library of Delft took a close look at the way IKEA did business in Delft, and asked itself according

to *Eimer Wioldraaijer, Jos Debeij and Erik Boekesteijn*: what can we learn from this company?

Libraries are not about books and buildings anymore, but rather about services and reaching users. This is shown by libraries in Kenya, where, since the outbreak of Covid-19, some branches have excelled through innovative services for youth, as illustrated by *Buhle Mbambo-Thata*. Innovative ways in which libraries work is also shown by the National Library of South Africa which is providing ICT services to its users. It started with a project in which unemployed ICT graduates were recruited and trained to provide ICT support throughout the country in public libraries, as well as providing free computer training to library staff, library users and the broader community. Offering library services to all possible users means also providing equal access to information and supporting creativity and cultural development as *Abeer S. Al-Kuwari* demonstrates in the development of libraries in Qatar. The concept of Qatar National Library with its beginning in 2012 and formal opening in 2018, was born out of a need for a library service that was more coherent, contemporary and digital. The number of books borrowed from libraries in Qatar increased by 500 percent in 2017.

Buildings are also reflecting the trend that libraries are a focal point of the whole community. *Anna-Maria Soininvaara* argues that the new library Oodi in Helsinki was developed to keep the users involved, from the very first ideas to a place where the users continually contribute to improving its services. Staff of the library were dealing with the problem that active citizens are easily over-represented or have a louder voice, and that the different influencer groups did not meet together, so each one got the wrong impression that Oodi would become a big player in their specific sector. Consequently, the library, which serves all residents, started seeking out missing groups. Library staff attended meetings with people at public events, such as various festivals. One group that they did not anticipate enough were drug addicts, who discovered Oodi's restrooms during the second winter after opening. The staff are now confronted with the challenge how to maintain the status of being a treasured cultural house and still welcome all groups.

The era of the book palace is superseded with the advent of computing and digital documents. Libraries went from collections of things to information centres. Libraries are no longer just a place with stuff, they are a gateway to the world of information. Gone is the quaint Victorian era concept of the patron, replaced by the modern user; a term



Oodi Helsinki, Finland. Photo: Risto Rimpipi.

freshly taken from computer scientists and drug dealers, as *David Lankes* writes. Librarians discover that the value they provide to the community, is in the community itself. Libraries become the 'third space', and instead of users, they have citizens, neighbours or members. Since Covid-19, the role of the public library becomes even more critical in creating a positive civic environment that attracts people in the way that corporations and office towers once did. In a world where digitization, cost efficiency, and social impact have become key concepts, and where competition from social media, the internet, and leisure activities is fierce, every day libraries must fight to remain visible, *Saskia Leferink and Scott Livingston* argue. The on-demand economy has also rapidly accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic and has direct implications for library services and programming.

In Chicago, *Andrea Tell* describes how removing the punitive measure of issuing fines for overdue items, along with acknowledging that having the materials returned was much more important than fines they most certainly would never collect, the library removed a critical barrier and levelled the playing field for its users. In the months after the library eliminated overdue fines, it saw materials assumed lost forever returned, and more importantly, previously blocked users returning. In 2017 the library started a partnership with

the Chicago Housing Authority to co-locate library branches with affordable and mixed-use housing. Communal meeting spaces are available to the library, the building residents, and the community, and serve as spaces not only for story times and book discussions, but for voting, health screenings, resident meetings and community policing events. Thus, libraries function as a place which promotes equal access, participation, and exchange of ideas.

The Library as a Learning Centre

Apart from acting as a reforming power against disasters, illiteracy, climate change and neglect, and as a hub for democracy, participation and equal access, libraries are developing as learning centres. *Rolf Hapel* finds it important that in any modern library education attention is given to promoting a critical view not only to fake news, but also to seemingly 'neutral' algorithms that hold assumptions and biases. He signals that in recent years public library legislation in North European countries such as Norway, Finland and the Netherlands, has explicitly mandated libraries to initiate democratic discourse and debate. In the library sectors of both the United States and the United Kingdom, community engagement generally seems to revolve more



Devonport Library, New Zealand. Photo: Jason Mann Photography.

around issues of social and racial equity, diversity, and inclusion; he attributes this to the deeper, more difficult, and very visible societal challenges and the weaker public sector, especially in the United States.

In the last twenty years a fundamental change took place in the skills which are demanded from the people working in a library, *Barbara Lison* argues. Universally available information 'with a click of your fingertips' in principle is no longer a monopoly of libraries; the internet and digitized information carriers now do the job. Therefore, librarians are less the 'owners' but rather the 'intermediaries' of information. Thus, some of the most essential attributes demanded in the library profession now are communication and social skills, combined with a striving for innovation and development. Unfortunately, these qualities are not always fully developed in library staff. *June Garcia* considers that to determine what knowledge, skills, and abilities a successful new director should possess, it is striking that very few of them are learned during professional library education. She concludes that individuals without formal library education can be successful public library directors. What is important is a basic understanding of library operations as well as understanding the core values and tenets of public librarianship.

Technological giants and information service providers (ISPs) such as Amazon and Google have taken the monopoly of free access to information from libraries. These ISPs are interested in providing access to open content to increase their advertising revenues. However, as *Giuseppe Vitiello* considers, libraries are offering a 'third place', next to home and workplace. Externally, libraries are designed to be exciting, to stimulate the curiosity and attract people. Internally, the public spaces are neutral but are felt as a catalyst for meeting opportunities where individuals can engage in conversations. The re-invention of libraries has followed patterns of development aimed to meet the needs of job seekers, those lacking computer skills and information poor citizens. One of the results of this library reorientation has been to add on the traditional library role of information provider the new roles and responsibilities as learning centres.

With respect to public libraries in Europe, the trend is for attractive, exciting design buildings. *Maija Berndtson* is of the opinion that the new prestigious libraries in major cities, such as Oodi in Helsinki, have influenced the whole library field in many ways. These libraries have shown concretely that they play a central part in developing city centers besides other cultural institutions. As open non-commercial public spaces, these libraries attract many people and are the most visited



institutions. They also prove a rich variety of services, and work with different partners to provide these. For her, statements about moving focus from collection to connection and from product to user-orientation became clear and concrete when she heard about new planning guidelines: 70 per cent of the space for the users, 30 per cent for the collection, while before it was the opposite. One vivid and dominant trend is the design of the indoor stairs which are as much intended for sitting, as for a platform, or a ramp. *Sue Sutherland* deals with new community libraries in New Zealand where the architecture and design reflect and complements the unique features of these communities. The new building *Turanga* (2018), the central library for Christchurch City, is a stunning 5 level building with a soaring atrium that lets in light and provides interesting views between the levels of the building, with art fully integrated into the fabric of the building. There is everything you would expect from a 21st century service: a range of meeting and study spaces, a music production studio, computer lab, maker area, a conference room with kitchen facilities, local history and archival area, children's and young people's spaces, cafés and of course collections.

The trend of falling library users and decreasing book loans was reversed by the 26 public libraries in Singapore, as *Catherine Lau* shows. Situating libraries in shopping

malls has paid off for the National Library Board (NLB) and mall developers, as both parties have benefited from the increased foot traffic. Over time, the NLB plans to move more of their standalone libraries to shopping malls and town hubs as part of their effort to make library spaces more accessible to people. The Orchard library which reopened in 2014 at a new location in Orchard Gateway mall, the city's downtown shopping street, is a modern collection that leans heavily on design and lifestyle, with spaces that cater for formal talks, informal sharing sessions and hands-on programmes that teach art and design. For older Singaporeans who are less mobile, non-slip floors, hand rails and ergonomically-designed seating have been integrated as part of the design, as are corridors and wider-than-usual spaces between shelves that provide access for the navigation of wheelchairs and other mobility devices. The inclusion of a digital video magnifier and e-newspaper booths that allow seniors to increase the size of the font is another first in this library. Programmes at the library teach senior citizens basic digital and technological skills. The Chinatown library became Singapore's first wholly volunteer-run public library when it opened its doors in 2013, doing away with staffed counters for basic library services and encouraging a culture of self-help.

In almost every contribution, the present danger of infection with Covid-19 plays a role. *Vicki McDonald* writes that during this crisis the Queensland State library decided to put as many collections as possible online, organize webinars and story times, and build access to e-resources for adults and children. She thinks that the success of initiatives introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic will influence future service planning and delivery. In his contribution *Gonzalo Oyarzún* shows that the National Library of Peru took on the challenge of guaranteeing access to information and culture from the first days of the Covid-19 crisis, by different services and initiatives from its website, from talks by telephone to digital programs. Having reached about 10 million people, who have seen or reproduced the contents in almost the entire Peruvian territory and in more than 40 countries around the world, the library's users increased thousands of times in relation to the face-to-face public.

Invitation

We found it energising to read about the different ways public libraries support citizens living their lives. We were inspired by the different ways libraries worldwide work with great passion and hope that every reader of this book will be affected likewise. While sometimes perceived as dull and old fashioned, this book shows how libraries around the world are living, vibrant homes of the community!

Diederick Slijckerman
Ton van Vlimmeren
Utrecht, January 2021





A Privileged Job

by Ton van Vlimmeren

This book marks my retirement as director of the public library of Utrecht. I have been very privileged to meet during my career many wonderful colleagues from all over the world; many of them have become friends. You will find some of them here. For me, retiring does not mean the end of working life or the end of being involved with libraries. At least that is not my intention. But it certainly is a good moment to reflect and look back and to prepare for the future.

Real-life Lessons about Equal Opportunities

I can say my working experience started when I was a primary school kid. I grew up as fifth of eight children in a very roman catholic environment in a small village dominated by four convents in the shadow of an impressive basilica: a (smaller) copy of Saint Peters church in Rome. One congregation of nuns was running a home for elderly people and a hospital. My father was a foreman working at the farm of that monastery that was self-sufficient.

To feed ten mouths my father worked after hours as a gardener for the well to do citizens in the village and my brothers and I helped him by providing extra hands. We also went out during all our holidays to farms to weed on endless fields, pick beans, strawberries, broad beans, redcurrants, and the like.

This enabled for example to pay for our scouting summer camps or to buy a typewriter and to pay for the typing courses for all eight kids.

Later, as a teenager I worked in a pastry factory, a canning factory, carpentry workshop, an optical fiber mill and many other jobs to have money to pay for my hobbies.



In kindergarten 1959.

This way I developed experience in blue collar working environments.

According to the routine in those days in working class families most of my nephews and nieces enjoyed after primary school some vocational training and then went to work as laborers. My parents, having only primary school education, had a drive and the wisdom to do it differently. They managed to send the three eldest daughters to general education and find them office jobs and even to have five of us finishing higher education at universities!

For me this was in those days 'the normal thing'. But looking back I am grateful and amazed what my parents have managed to do.



View on Oudenbosch.

It has also been a real-life lesson about equal opportunities, and this became a thread in my working life.

It was also an era in which our government as a mix of Christian-Democratic caritas and Social-Democratic ideology created the welfare state and enabled working-class kids to study. By the way, this is all being broken down in the last 25 years by neo-liberal governments and now libraries help to pick up the pieces.

Reading was, with hindsight, a third and probably the most important factor that enabled me to grab the chances that were offered. I was an avid reader. My mother sometimes would

- 1 **Basil Bernstein**, Education cannot compensate for society, 1970.



At 17 as a student.

say I risked my brains by reading so much. Every week I went to the public library in our village and read not only 'my' books but also those of my elder brother and if I really ran out of books also these of my older sisters. At secondary school, the school library provided a good addition to my reading opportunities.

Reading did not only bring me language, knowledge, concepts and philosophy, but it also opened up lives of people in the biographies I read and worlds that were far beyond the horizon of our small village in the countryside.

We now know that 15 minutes of reading a day makes your vocabulary grow by 1000 words per year. I strongly feel that to

a great extent my ability to write, to speak and argue, to learn different languages all comes down to reading as much as I did.

The great respect I have for all those librarians around the world who do their work at the most basic level to create reading and learning opportunities for everyone is based on this experience. Therefore the contributions in this book by Sanjana Sheresta, Basheerhamad Shadrach, Elizabeth Pierre Louis and Gonzalo Oyarzún, just to mention a few, could for me not be missed here. They do great work. But also, in Europe or in North America librarians are fighting inequality as is shown by the contributions of for example Spaska Tarandova and Siobhan Reardon.

At seventeen as a student at the university I still had much to learn – sometimes the hard way- about the 'real world'. Books were my handhold and accompanied me on that journey. As a student of psychology, I was not only involved in the student movement of the early seventies – protesting in favor of democratization of higher education and against the raising of tuition fees – but also in educational improvement projects. The aim was, despite that 'education cannot compensate for society', to enhance the school results of working-class kids and migrant children by additional activities in the classroom and beyond.¹

- 2 **E.g. Currie; Thomas** (1995), Head Start, LRA, archived from the original on February 7, 2005
- 3 **Paul Willis**, Learning to Labour; How working-class kids get working class jobs, 1978.
- 4 **E.g. lezing Stephen Krashen** ↗lezen.nl
- 5 **Library Supporting Early Childhood Literacy for Columbus Children** ↗friendsofcml.com
- 6 **Nina Simon**, The Art of Relevance, Santa Cruz, 2016

We were optimistic, although the great model, the Head Start program in the USA showed mixed results.² Paul Willis analyzed and demonstrated how strong the reproduction systems of inequality were and how difficult it would be to beat them.³ But we tried.

Today we still find many great motivated teachers building upon the experiences of the last fifty years to achieve the best for children from less privileged backgrounds.

'What for Heaven Sake Should I Do in a Library?'

After my study I worked in the Educational Counseling Service, finding that most of the kids I tested as a psychologist for special educational needs came from deprived homes. I became a counselor for innovation in education and then a project-leader of the Educational Priority Areas; schoolteachers, social workers, librarians, and others worked together in a neighborhood in an integrated approach for better educational opportunities.

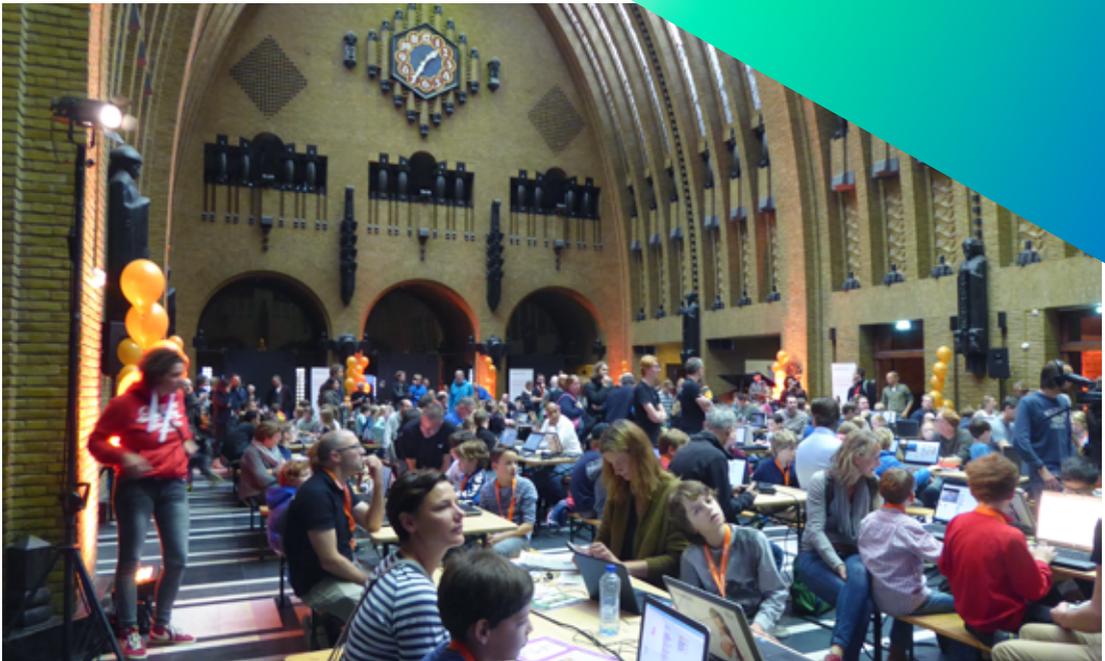
We already tried to assess the results, for example of the reading promotion activities of the library, by setting up a research program

with the Utrecht University. Now we know, thanks to scholars like Stephen Krashen, that reading of juveniles is – after social economic status of the family – the most important predictor for success in school and society.⁴

All libraries have activities to promote reading. The Columbus Metropolitan Library, under leadership of Pat Losinski, is a great example of a library that made a radical choice and has given absolute priority to getting children 'kindergarten- ready', to give them a better start in the educational system.⁵

In the Netherlands and internationally the results of children on international comparison reading tests are getting worse every year, meaning we need to intensify our efforts and learn from every example. A big investment in reading, including in libraries, is needed. As the digital world is here to stay it should be combined with a great effort in digital citizenship.

My career moved on and I became head of the team responsible for compulsory educational enforcement and was responsible for the amalgamation of schools into bigger units as was then the policy. In the end I was governing on behalf of the city council the public schools in our city.



Coding for kids in the main hall of Neude library.

One day in 1995 I was 'seduced' to become a library director. I met Wendy de Graaff, one of the librarians with whom I had co-operated in the educational priority areas, on the street. She said we should have a coffee and I should become her new (library) director. I then spoke the historic words: 'What for heaven sake should I do in a library?' The rest is history.

It was the time that libraries in the Netherlands were just at their peak as book circulating membership organizations. A decline in use began and who would have predicted that libraries would still play an important – or better an even more important – role 20 years later? Internet quickly gained importance.

David Lankes, also in his contribution in this book, describes that libraries lost their monopoly on (printed) information and became a new kind of information centers and adopted more roles in time. This also was the start of the reinvention and transition of the library; a process that has dominated my

library career. It is great to work with a team of passionate and motivated library colleagues on such a challenge like I did in Utrecht. It is rewarding to see individuals grow in new roles and extend themselves to forward the library. For example, to see a children's librarian turning into a successful programmer of cultural events. In the last ten years we set great steps forward, opening the libraries to partners, making it a place for courses and development, starting our makerspaces, organizing more than 3000 educational and cultural events per annum. We continue in developing 'with the citizens' instead of 'for the citizens'; inspired by Nina Simon.⁶

Many contributions in this book give great examples of how librarians and libraries succeed in addressing the needs in their communities and how successful libraries have been to adapt to the changes in society. The Utrecht Public Library is no exception and managed to continue growing in membership and use until today despite all negative information on the future of libraries. Hannelore Vogt gives an insight in this book in the innovation of the library of Cologne.

The examples of how creative and successful libraries all over the world reacted to the Covid crisis also demonstrates the flexibility and the will of librarians to serve the public. Vicki McDonald gives a great example of this from Australia.

The library is an exciting place and it made me after I left the library for some years and was at crossroads in my career, return to the most wonderful job I can imagine.

Challenges for Libraries

Having said that, people still underestimate how challenging library transition processes are. It was once described by a colleague as 'pushing bare handed a pool of treacle uphill on a sandy dune'.

Part of this is due to the image of libraries in the outside world. Despite our communication efforts there is still a lot of misunderstanding of the modern library. We should demonstrate more the impact of libraries and become better advocates. Ilona Kish addresses this issue in her contribution to this book.

Inside the library the difficulty of change is often linked to that same passion that all librarians have for the profession. Being a librarian is often not only a profession, but an important part of the personal identity of the librarian. Changing the profession of the librarian is therefore trying to change the identity of the person. I often say that working in the library has addressed my professional training as a psychologist more than anything else I have done.

If that passion of the librarian also involves people and not only books, the process of running and changing the library at the same time, is often joyful and fruitful. But if books are the real and only passion it can become difficult. Librarians then sometimes feel the book library they cherish, will be taken away by the changes in the library. And let us be frank, there is some truth in that. Twenty-five years ago, some thirty staff members in Utrecht Library were busy handling books in acquisition and cataloguing. Now there is only a handful of staff involved in the book process. Most of that process is now automated and offered as a service to libraries by NBD Biblion. Nina Nannini addresses in her contribution the development and future of these services.

Library leaders serve public institutions near the political spotlight. June Garcia addresses this in her contribution on what

it means to become a library director. It can be a lonely and risky position. I was lucky to survive some challenges thanks to the trust and support of my board.

Part of this is due to the tension between the speed of change needed for libraries to adapt to the changes in society and the speed the organization can sustain. If your environment is changing quicker than you are, you will become redundant soon. From the Russian developmental psychologists, I learned you always must work on the next phase of development; even if you want to make a big leap forward, you cannot stretch to far.

More than 15 years ago Jan van Vaerenbergh of Antwerp Public Library in Belgium ran into a yearlong fight and legal procedures with staff and unions over the opening of the library on Sunday. Today we can read in Barbara Lisons contribution that the idea that libraries should be open when the visitors are there, still needs to gain traction in Germany. We are not there yet!

That is, if we look ahead. If we look back it is amazing how libraries and their staff have developed over the last 25 years. A well-deserved compliment to all!

The Dutch Scene

At the turn of the century I became vice-president of the Dutch Library Association. President Erik Jurgens, a well-known Dutch politician, and I made a good team and we tried to make the role of the association more specific, more effective and worked to get the board, the bureau and the association aligned to face the future. More pragmatic were activities like the procurement committee that tried to materialize in hard currency the benefits of scale by buying with as many libraries as possible digital content, insurances, energy, etcetera.

As board member I participated on behalf of the library field in the Governmental Steering Committee for restructuring the libraries. The goal was to merge library organizations into more robust foundations that served at least one hundred thousand inhabitants. Of course, there was unrest, internal focus, and competition in who would become director of that bigger amalgamated library. But I believe that there is now indeed a stronger library field with a different level of organization and management. To create the desired scale of organization some libraries now serve five, ten or even seventeen councils. I admire my colleagues who can handle the complexity of so many political environments involved.

I also contributed to the creation of an MBA for library managers at Nyenrode Business University. This was special as since the mid-nineties most schools of higher education in the Netherland amalgamated with big institutions. The library schools in the country disappeared, and the new courses in information management delivered most of their graduates to companies that offered better conditions than public libraries. Rolf Hapel in his contribution argues for radical training for library students to prepare for the future library. Compared to countries that still have library schools the Dutch libraries are doing quite well without them. Erik Boekesteijn and Jos Debeij give you an insight in the Dutch library scene at this moment in their interview with Eimer Wieldraaijer.

reading competencies. Throughout the years I exchanged a lot with colleagues in this network like Siobhan Reardon (now chair of the Metlib section), Suzanne Payette and Abeer S. Al-Kuwari. I am happy that ten contributions of Metlib colleagues, including these three, can be found in this book.



A kids corner, games to develop skills needed to learn to read.

International Work

In 2000 my then colleague from Rotterdam Public Library Frans Meijer introduced me to Intamel, now the Metropolitan Libraries section of IFLA, at the conference in St. Louis, USA. I saw there how the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded computer rooms in libraries to create access to information for all. I 'stole' from St. Louis Public Library the idea for what we in Utrecht call 'kid's corners'. We still have these computers with software for kids who cannot read yet but can practice and enhance their pre-

In 2001 I became a member of the International Network of Public Libraries of the Bertelsmann Foundation. One of the aims of the foundation was to create better libraries around the globe and this Network was one of the instruments. Fifteen library directors from all over the world had to identify trends in library development, report in papers about this and present the results at conferences around the world. It was a great learning opportunity to work with colleagues from libraries like Toronto, Los Angeles, Christchurch, Helsinki, and Aarhus and to be able to have a 'look in the kitchen' of

libraries from Brisbane to Seattle. All paid by the Bertelsmann Foundation and with permission of the alderman who was responsible for libraries in Utrecht, this was a big gift in life. This network enabled me to organize two international library conferences in Utrecht. Thanks to Bertelsmann I became a known Dutch librarian abroad. It got to the level that my young daughters, thinking about traveling the world in the future, were confident that whenever something would happen, they just could go to the library and ask for the director who would sure be a friend of their father.



Discovery area in Singapore library 2001.

My first conference with the Bertelsmann Network was in Singapore where director Christopher Chia then implemented the Libraries 2000 plan. Catherine Lau shares in this book the state of the art in Singapore's libraries at this moment. After the conference on the way back home in the plane I was depressed. I had seen so many good innovations in Singapore,

like RFID self-service, but believed we would not be able to implement these in Utrecht for years. However, thanks to the staff of Utrecht Public Library and with the help of NBD Biblion we managed to introduce RFID self-service in our libraries within two years. Henk Das, then director of NBD Biblion, started to provide all books delivered to Dutch libraries with radio frequency identification chips for free on a standardized data format. This propelled the introduction of RFID service in Dutch libraries forward.

Researching self-service in libraries with Christine Mackenzie, now IFLA president and author of the chapter on global developments and who has become like a sister to me, was a great pleasure and very fruitful.

I have equal great memories on working with Jens Ingemann Larsen and Deborah Jacobs on the publication 'Cultural Diversity: How public libraries can serve the diversity in the community'. It was the most downloaded report on the Bertelsmann website, and I presented it on numerous occasions. It was translated in several languages including Dutch. It brought me the Victorine van Schaick medal for achievements in the library profession. Although I had my 'coming out' as a librarian some years earlier (when I bought a sweater with Librarian embroidered on it) I then knew I had finally made it. It was a long way from when I applied



Receiving the Victorine van Schaick medal for contributions to the profession.



Members of the Bertelsmann Network in a panel discussion at the Public Libraries Conference Phoenix, 2002.

for the job of director and a delegation of staff went to the mayor's office to pledge that an education man could not become a library director. History repeated itself when the same happened to me when I subsequently as a librarian applied for the job of director of Real Estate and Development; and again, the attempt to deny me the post was in vain.

The Bertelsmann Network was officially terminated in 2003 when the foundation set other priorities. But in fact, it still lives on today as we have become personal friends, exchanging professional knowledge, collaborating on projects, opening our houses to one another, and enjoying reunions (and now Zoom calls). Ten of the contributions in this book are from members of the Bertelsmann network. One of them by Sue Sutherland, who introduces us to many libraries in New Zealand as she did to me when I stayed there.

A new Central Library for Utrecht

As early as 1998 we started discussion in Utrecht about a new central library. The town was growing with a new suburb, planned to house more than 100.000 people. The library was developing new roles and the examples of new libraries in The Hague, Maastricht, Eindhoven, Hengelo and plans in other cities demonstrated that there was a world to be won. Of course, the many beautiful and innovative libraries I saw in different countries were inspiration too. Münster, Vancouver, Singapore, and Seattle to mention a few. We puzzled a lot on how to finance the new building and researched for example the then popular Public Private Initiatives in the United Kingdom.



The new central library that never came. Picture: Rapp+Rapp Architects

When I left the library to become director of Real Estate and Development everything seemed to be all right: there was political will, a way to pay the budget and a plot of land. This all came together in the 4-year planning of the new city council in spring 2006.

However, mistakes in the selection and legal fights about which architect should have won the competition delayed the process for years. Then the financial crisis came and when in 2010 the opposition won the local elections they faced a project for a new library that was not theirs.

When I returned after 5 years to be the director of the Utrecht Public Library in the fall of 2010 the process had moved on, but due to lack of real political will there was much delay. In the end, when the contract with the builders

was already signed and one last council decision was needed, the project was voted down in January 2014 by a 23-22 majority. It had become a topic in the next elections of spring 2014. In the IFLA publication on reuse of existing buildings more can be read about this process.⁷

After this deception we drank a glass and started within 2 weeks to make new plans for a central library in the former main post office. I never felt more convinced I had to show leadership than that moment. If I would let go, it all would be wasted.

The building is a venue of itself: An imposing and rich Art Deco building from 1924 in the style of the Amsterdam school. It is in the heart of the city and in the heart of the citizens of Utrecht. We managed to make the plans work and to succeed in opening



The neighborhood library in Leidsche Rijn.

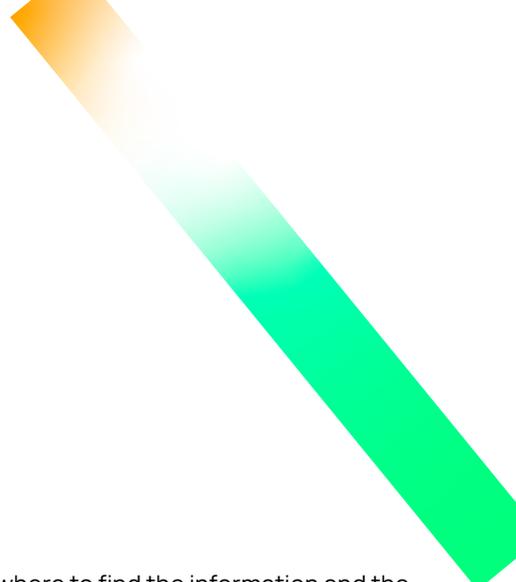
a new central library within 6 years. On Friday March 13, 2020, HRH Princess Laurentien was scheduled to open the building. Less than 24 hours before the opening the government locked down the country because of Covid and the opening and all 160 activities for the two weeks opening festival had to be cancelled.

The building demonstrated its potential during the period that Covid rules were softened but most conferences and visits had to be cancelled. For those that wanted to visit the Neude library there is guided tour in English available on the library website.⁸

Maija Berndtson is an inspiring expert on library building and in her contribution, she analyzes the developments in library building in north western Europe. We also benefitted for our plans from plans and experiences with new libraries like in Amsterdam, Almere, Dok1 in Arhus, and Oodi in Helsinki. Anna-Maria

Soininvaara shares with us the co-operation process with the citizens of Helsinki in developing Oodi.

The building of the new library in Leidsche Rijn, the new suburb, took even longer. The planning started in 1996 and the library finally opened in May 2019; a process of 23 years. You can hardly be accountable for spending so much time and energy of a library organization on just getting your premises organized. It is demanding for staff and management and consumes the energy and creativity that should be spent on developing services. However, libraries need good spaces to fulfill their role; spaces that facilitate these services. How important these spaces are for the citizens is shown in almost all the contributions in this book. The library as a third place, the library as a venue, the library as a lively community hub.



I tend to describe the library as trifold, like a clover leaf. The most important is the value the library adds to society and to the people in the community. Second is the library as an organization that produces value by its services, activities and programs that are conducted by competent staff. And third are the venues, mostly library buildings, that need to facilitate these activities. Buildings are never a goal, but always a means. Good quality buildings certainly help to reach your goals better. The library has become – in the words of David Lankester – a house of books, plus an information center, plus a workshop, plus a living room and a movement. Therefore there has been in the past decades a constant need to adjust the library buildings to these goals. That is how I became involved in 15 smaller and bigger building and renovating processes of libraries during my career.

Neighborhood libraries are as important as the flagship store. In our city they serve a different public; often people that have less opportunities. I am glad we managed, also in 2020, to renovate the Overvecht Library as the last of these to be done. It is now a better meeting place for the citizens, has separate rooms for homework and language classes and is more flexible for undisturbed use by different groups at the same time. In this less privileged neighborhood, the demand was to create a place for those who do not know where

to look or where to find the information and the support they need. That is the library!

Another assignment I got in 2010 was to take the library out of the city administration and governance and make it a private –though subsidized– foundation. At the outset it started as move to create space for entrepreneurship and to do away with administrative regulations that do not fit a service-oriented organization like a library. But soon, because of the financial crisis, the budget cuts came, and I can say I had my share of them. The tragedy in libraries often being that when we finally create budget for innovating services it is taken by a new round of budget cuts.

The city council of Utrecht decided in October 2012 that the public library would become a foundation starting January 1, 2013. But the board and I negotiated because of the risky financial conditions until November 30, 2013, and only then we signed the contract. Being a subsidized foundation governed by a director governor that is supervised by a board operating under the Code Culture Governance is very different than being part of the administrative system of the city. There is indeed more room for entrepreneurship, it feels like 'playing for real' and focus can be more on the citizens to be served as you are further away from the sometimes-irrational political decision-making process. But most of the

budget still comes from the city and politics are never far away. We maintain strong ties, as we also do with our citizens and partners.

Intermezzo

I developed special interest in building during the time I was director of Real Estate and Development for the city of Utrecht. I often had to explain to library colleagues that there was for me not so much difference between trying to increase the quality of life for citizens by building good schools, community facilities and livable neighborhoods, and the mission of libraries to enhance the quality of life by personal development of citizens. In the Netherlands there was a short period that housing corporations were invited to invest more in the quality of the communities to make them more social and inclusive and became potential partners of libraries. I am very happy that Andrea Telli shares her experiences from Chicago where the Chicago Public Library and the Chicago Housing Authority aligned activities in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

The Gates Program

When I returned as library director, I was invited by Deborah Jacobs, a great colleague and friend, who then had become

director of the Global Libraries program of the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, to support the program in the Strategic Advisors group. A great honor that opened my eyes to a different part of the library world. Deborah Jacobs and Jessica Dorr give an overview of the work of the foundation in this book.



Strategic advisors of the Global Libraries Program at work, Seattle 2011.

The projects I saw put many things in a different perspective. I remember assessing a project in co-operation with the Coca Cola Foundation Indonesia that aimed at providing 40 libraries with computers to create access to information and support micro-economic initiatives for small businesses of women. The most basic question however was if the power supply would sustain the load of the computers!

Buhle Mbambo-Thata was one of the other strategic advisors and she gives an overview of what is happening in Southern Africa.



An Ineli group at dinner Santiago de Chile 2014

Part of the Gates program was the International Network of Emerging Library Innovators (Ineli). The Ineli program was supported by June Garcia, who put in all her experience on leadership in libraries.

The first conference I attended with my colleague Mariken van Meer was in Rotterdam. We were all in tears by the short movie of the colleagues from Nepal showing the power of libraries and literacy.⁹ It is about equal opportunities: a woman sharing her history. As 'only' a girl she did not have to learn how to read, as a woman she now teaches others, thanks to the support of the local library.

Thanks to the mediation of Allison Dobbie, who mentored a group of colleagues from Oceania, four of these – Christophe Augias, Gaspar Freitas, Kakaito Kasi and Lorin Pai – give an insight in how libraries are developing in their communities. The impact of the work of the Gates Foundation on libraries can hardly be overestimated as can be seen in many contributions – 22 of the authors were engaged in it.

The Gates Foundation also wanted to promote libraries on the European level. I was happy to introduce them to the Reading and Writing Foundation presided by HRH Princess Laurentien. Public Libraries 2020 was born as an advocacy organization in Brussels under the leadership of Ilona Kish. After the Gates Foundation left the library field it continued as PL2030; a network for innovation in libraries in Europe in which six of the authors in this book participate.

A Sustainable Future

When you stay a while in the library field you somehow automatically roll into different governing boards. I became a member of the Pica Foundation, supporting the Dutch libraries financially on innovation, was president of the Board of NBD Biblion and build up a



EBLIDA annual Council Strasbourg 2018.

relation to push innovation with OCLC, the supplier of our Wise library automation system. I am happy Saskia Leferink and Scott Livingston share their insights on how technology can help libraries to deliver better service and release staff capacity for new services.

In 2018 I became president of EBLIDA, the European library organization. I enjoy the effort of EBLIDA to be a hub for libraries in Europe. Copyright and legislation have long been dominant on the agenda. Now, European funding for libraries to contribute to the realization of the Green Deal, the ambitious program in Europe for the sustainable development goals is also a priority. There is a world to be won and libraries are – as shown in this book and in the contribution of Giuseppe Vitiello - in the frontline.

I strongly believe in this role of libraries; the values of libraries are almost identical to a number of the sustainable development goals: equal opportunities, no discrimination, lifelong learning, an inclusive society, free access to information, freedom of speech; just to mention a few. The IFLA-UNESCO Library Manifesto says the librarians are the gatekeeper of the democracy. We should not accept less! Marie Østergård tells us in her contribution how.

This is not something for the future. It is happening now. In our library, before opening hours the students que to find a study place, kids carry out as many books as they can, I see migrants in language classes in our neighborhood libraries, an exhibition on hunger, a debate on sustainable urban development, a Queer café on Coming Out day, a talk show on World Poverty Day, senior citizens working with their Digital Buddies, and thousands of activities more. This makes me proud that I worked with the team of the Utrecht Public Library on a better future!



Talkshow in Neude library.

About the author

Sanjana Shrestha is a firm believer of the community-led development approach acknowledging the power and the capacity of the communities to take charge of their own development. She believes that facilitating to create 'space' for the community will help to instigate meaningful community engagement, put local voices in the lead, build local strengths, build a common vision and collaborate across different partners to achieve systemic change. She is committed to ensuring READ's approach to community-led development will ensure self-reliance and empower communities to take charge of their own development.

Sanjana joined READ Nepal as Program Officer in June 2004. Undertaking different positions thereafter she served as Country Director from January 2009 through February 2018. During her tenure, she was able to take READ Nepal into new heights and identify different ideas on how community-led development can be practiced and can be adapted into different contexts. Sanjana's expertise and facilitation skills have been critical in expanding the READ model to India and Bhutan. She served as Senior Program Specialist in READ Global between March 2018 until November 2019 providing strategic program design guidance to READ's overall replication. Most recently, she held the position of CEO of READ Nepal from Dec 2019 to provide strategic direction towards organizational growth and sustainability.



Community Libraries as the first Responders in Times of Disaster

by Sanjana Shrestha (Nepal)

I will highlight the role of community libraries in building resilient communities through local networks and support to help the communities through disaster. Community libraries are built with strong partnership of the local communities and are owned and managed by local communities. The process used to establish the community libraries generates four characteristics of community capacity: (1) a sense of community, (2) a shared commitment among community members over what happens in their community, (3) the ability to solve problems and (4) building access to resources; which is an important outcome in and of itself.¹ During this entire process, the libraries also build social capital and social trust which is critical for local collaboration and coordination to respond to disasters and emergencies. Community libraries are embedded within the communities, and have better in-depth knowledge of local people, risk, and vulnerabilities, so they are best placed to understand and identify community support needs when required. My experience is based on the lived experience of Rural Education And Development Nepal (READ Nepal) supported community libraries dealing with two big

disasters: the 2015 Earthquake and Covid-19. READ Nepal and community libraries do not have formal role and experience in disaster recovery efforts, however community libraries in Nepal have spontaneously taken various roles to support disaster recovery in the communities. The experience of community libraries helping the communities during these two big disasters is explained and some lessons based on these experiences are laid forward.

Background

Community libraries in Nepal are welcoming places for everyone in the communities. Communities go there because there is wifi, because it has a hall with a high ceiling, a fan. It is comfortable to pass the time because it is too hot in their house there are friends you can meet, and you can get a discussion and advise about your problems. When there are issues and problems in the communities, communities turn to the libraries to solve problems – be it the problem they had in farming (Suliman, 2018),² the pain they have due to uterus prolapse³ the credit they need to start up their business⁴, or help of ambulance if they need to go to the hospital.⁵

- 1 [↗PDF Case study self sustaining development rural communities nepal](#)
- 2 **Suliman**, 2018
- 3 **Digital tools raise awareness on maternal health in Nepal**, 2012,
- 4 **Martin & Adhikari**, 2008
- 5 **Shrestha**, 2013
- 6 **Shrestha & Krolak**, 2015
- 7 **Alarie-Leca**, 2013
- 8 **Massar, Swathi; Amulya, Joy; Laesecke, Anna.** [↗PDF Achieving Self-Sustaining Development in Rural Communities](#) : A Case Study of the READ Model in Nepal 2018 IREX
- 9 **Nepal**, 2017
- 10 **Nepal**, 2017

For the past 30 years, READ has been active in building communities through community libraries in three countries. READ Global was established in 1992 in California, US and has three country affiliates (READ Nepal, READ India and READ Bhutan) in addition to the global headquarters based in San Francisco.

Rooted in Nepal, READ has partnered with rural communities to establish 67 community libraries in 43 districts all over Nepal. Over time, the READ model for a typical community library has evolved, from traditional libraries to effective community development centres with strong focus on social empowerment, economic development and lifelong learning based on a library concept which is need-based, community owned and sustainable.⁶ By integrating community partnerships into the libraries' programmatic structure from the very beginning, READ sets the stage for profound cross-sector impact. From the time the foundation bricks are laid, READ centers are conceptualized not only as places to get books, but also as hubs for a multitude of services and programs that reflect community needs and celebrate local partnerships.⁷

The study conducted by IREX stated that the process used to establish community library generates the four characteristics of community capacity mentioned above: a sense

of community, a shared commitment among community members over what happens in their community, the ability to solve problems, and building access to resources.⁸

READ's approach recognizes that it is important to continually secure commitment to the Center by adapting to changing contexts and responding to new needs that emerge. This community-needs centric approach and operating principle of the READ model ensures that the READ Centers remain relevant platforms that serve community priorities. The community in Nepal faces different challenges related to disaster. Nepal is in the top 20 of all the multi-hazard countries in the world. More than 80% of the population is exposed to the risk of natural hazards which include earthquakes, droughts, floods, landslides, extreme temperatures, and glacier lake outburst floods.⁹

The 2015 Earthquake in Nepal

The 2015 Nepal earthquake is considered the deadliest natural disaster in Nepal's history. It hit after 82 years, causing 8,970 casualties and 22,302 injuries.¹⁰



Janajagan Community Library, Nuwakot, before Earthquake.

The 7.8 magnitude devastated countless poverty-stricken villages. In the wake of the disaster, phone lines, connectivity, and electricity were interrupted. Because of continuous aftershocks, people were afraid to enter their houses. READ Nepal was not experienced dealing with and responding to such disaster but was committed to serve in whatever way they could. READ Nepal set up the office intents as everyone was afraid to enter the building. Connecting to libraries was difficult. It was found that the disaster damaged over 1/3 of the country's community libraries established with READ's support. The devastation was a heartbreaking, as the libraries were the sole space for community gathering before the earthquakes.

It was amazing to witness how the network of community-owned and managed libraries sprang into action within days and hours. One of the community libraries which

was severely damaged was Janajagan community library in Nuwakot. This library has a fascinating history to follow, as this was the library that took the longest time to get established; 19 full years. Due to some mismanagement of the funds then, this library was left half-constructed for years till the youth of the community approached READ with the request that they wanted to make their dream come true by rebuilding the library in their village. The land for the construction of community library was donated by 85 years old Shubhadra in the name of her late husband; she wished that her community members should get the opportunity to read and write as she was married at the age of 11 and she never had the privilege to go to school. She spends 19 painful years just wishing that the library would be built. The library was rebuilt in 2012: the community celebrated the inaugural event for the two whole days, then, the library conducted many programs for the local community as



Janajagan Community Library, Nuwakot, devastated by Earthquake.



Temporary Community Library built in 15 days.

there were no local service centres. 1800 (!) women were made literate in the first year of its establishment, many agriculture trainings for the farmers were conducted, livelihood opportunities for women and men were carried out.¹¹ But unfortunately, after two years of operation, the library was harshly damaged by the 2015 earthquake.

READ team drove to Nuwakot; almost all the houses were destroyed. We saw a community with sad faces, and the vans and trucks filled with plastic buckets, tuna and noodle packets for the relief distribution and in contrast to which we also observed the fertile fields with wheat and maize, vegetable gardens with beans, cauliflower, radish and all. Shubhadra's home was collapsed; we found out where she was staying. She was in a small living cubicle made by a tin roof. Shubhadra held my hand and said:

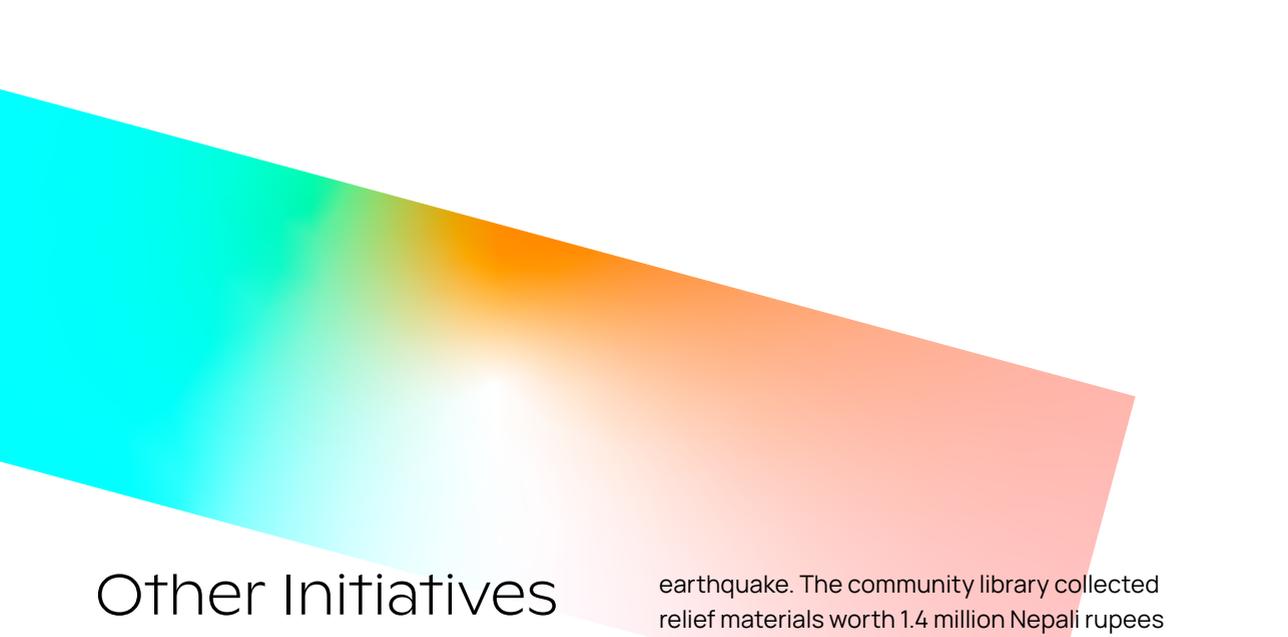
'After I saw my house collapsed, I ran to the library to see if the building was still standing, my heart shattered into pieces when I saw the library was fully damaged; I am old now I wish to see if we can reconstruct this library.'

She was not able to hold back her tears. The local people expressed how devastated they were to see the library damaged. It was the only place where the

community could go to be literate, receive agricultural training, early childhood learning, and receive relevant information. READ joined hands with them and the community built the Temporary Community Library (TCL), a simple one-room building made of tin in a cottage-like style, within 15 days and operated a temporary library service. The TCL in Nuwakot proved to be very prominent in the community. The government Village Development Committee (VDC) office also started government services from the TCL because their building was damaged and unsafe. The local government office established the section in the TCL to provide government relief packages; they worked together with the library management committee to identify the needy ones to offer the relief package. The local community used this TCL to address many needs and challenges brought by the earthquake. Seeing the potential of what a community library can do during the time of disaster, READ Nepal found a generous donor who offered help to rebuild an earthquake-resilient disabled friendly library, which was inaugurated on May 2018. Shubhadra's joy knew no bounds to see the construction of new library again in her village which is earthquake resilient.



Shubhadra doing ground breaking to build Temporary Community Library.



Other Initiatives

At another library in Panauti, the Gyan Bikash community mobilized 70 volunteers. The LMC (most of them were youth leaders) opened the library 3 hours after the earthquake. There was no electricity in the whole municipality. As the library got the power back up system, the community came to the library to charge their mobile and electric lamps. Many also found the place in the library to sleep as they were afraid to sleep at their home which were partially damaged. Immediately, the LMC started collecting the food and materials needed for the community.

'We went to the local government office to donate the materials (for earthquake affected people) we have collected; the officer asked us to store that in a room. I said we did not collect these materials to hold it here. but to distribute to the needy ones soon. Please tell us where we need to deliver, we want these materials to be handed over to the needy ones now. The officer told us the location, we went there and distributed it.'

Om Krishna Shrestha
President of Panauti Library

The 70 volunteers (including Library Management Committee members) of the Panauti community worked for 25 consecutive days in the relief efforts immediately after the

earthquake. The community library collected relief materials worth 1.4 million Nepali rupees (17,500 USD). The library volunteers distributed relief materials to 1042 houses in Panauti, which benefitted 3639 people. The community library undertook a drive to tackle the black market of relief items, which had become rampant around Panauti. They also took the initiative to collecting the relief items, such as clothes, food, and food oil, and distributed these items for free to other neighbouring highly affected districts. The youth also coordinated with the local hospitals to run the health camps. To ensure that the relief materials reached the right victims, the community library coordinated with local political leaders and civil forums.

A Child-Friendly Space (CFS) was set up at the community library immediately after the earthquake, where activities like games, dances, and song-singing were held. Om Krishna Shrestha, the library's vice-chairperson, reports that 70-120 children visited the CFS each day in the month after the earthquake. The community library also organized a rally and a commemoration program for those who had died in the quake. READ Nepal and Gaurishankar Community Library and Resource Center implemented a project funded by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to build 20 Temporary Learning Centres with accompanying WASH (toilet) facilities in 20 schools that had been



destroyed in Dolakha. A total of 2835 students benefitted. This project provided temporary alternative learning centres for school children. In this project, the community library worked closely with the Nepal government's District Education Office (DEO) of Dolakha. As part of this project, psychosocial training was also delivered to adults from each school so that they would be able to counsel traumatized children. The project's main objective was to ensure that schoolchildren did not get overlooked in the efforts of recovering from the trauma of the earthquake. The freshly painted, cosy buildings also proved inviting and attractive to the children.

'We were able to establish TLC of outstanding quality; we were able to mobilize the local resources; if we had to use the local resources, it would have been more than double what we got from UNICEF. It's because of our local network and working with the community that this has been possible'

Krishna
President of Gauri Shankar Library

READ supported community libraries that had served more than 100,000 people during the earthquake. Eight READ sponsored libraries from hard hit districts conducted relief work after the earthquake. These libraries included: Gyanbikash library of Panauti, Jhuwani library of Chitwan, Janajagaran library of Nuwakot, RIRC library of Badikhel, Triveni

library of Bhimdhunga, Rameshwor library of Chitwan, Pragatinagar library of Nawalparasi and Gaurishankar library of Dolakha. These relief and rescue efforts included taking injured people to the hospitals, rescuing people from damaged homes, uniting family members etc. The libraries mobilized more than 1000 volunteers collectively, and as a result, more than 1300 households benefitted.

Covid-19

Five years after the devastating earthquake, Nepal now has to get prepared for and respond to the Corona Pandemic. The government announced the blanket closure of the country, where nearly 30 million citizens are required to stay home. There is also a stigma around getting tested for Covid-19, and not all the people are aware and open to getting tested. Due to a lack of clear and sufficient information on Covid-19 and its restrictions, many people and organizations are unable to get prepared for the challenges that it might bring. The nationwide lockdown has not only created the shortage of essential supplies and price hike, but it has also put daily wage labourers, squatters, and poor and marginalized communities at risk.¹² As of August 29, 2020; 36,456 people were officially infected from Covid-19, increasing to 94,253 on October 7 with 3439 new infections on that day.



With the Coronavirus, we were curious about how the libraries would respond. There are restrictions on the movement and meeting of people due to the virus, which is just the opposite of how community libraries work. Libraries provide space where you can meet, interact, socialize, consult, and act. It is the place which facilitates human connection, but Covid-19 is saying 'no' to a social gathering, and 'yes' to social distancing. Community libraries are the hub where community members come to discuss the issues and the members find the possible solutions together interacting with each other, it used to be the space where communities come together to build social connections and trust to inspire change and build confidence, but now Covid-19 is forcing people to stay away from each other.

While the libraries' physical space and resources have been closed down, the libraries are using their network of trust and partnership that they have built with the local organizations and with fellow communities. The social network and social capital that the libraries have built-in years are now functioning as the foundation of support. Now all these networks are joining hand together in a creative way to help communities during this Covid-19 crisis. Out of 67 READ supported libraries in Nepal, 50 are actively responding to Covid-19. While most community libraries have closed

their physical premises temporarily to help slow the spread of the virus, they rely on longstanding partnerships, networks, and trusted relationships to continue to serve their communities in new and exciting ways.

To provide need-based services on Covid-19 response, READ Nepal in partnership with community libraries carried out community situation analysis and gathered input from more than 22,000 community members about their pressing needs during the pandemic. Based on need, the community libraries liaise with local government agencies and other partners to provide need-based services. They provided ambulance services to 149 individuals and referred others with Covid-19 symptoms to local hospitals. As of the end of July 2020, 18 community libraries have already reached 22,760 people to educate them on Covid-19 and how to protect their families. The volunteers of community library distributed 1700 masks, 118 sanitizers, and 1200 gloves to those in need, along with 6992 food rations to daily wage workers with no income. The libraries also assisted 135 migrant workers who were stranded on their way home during the lockdown. Community libraries have forged partnerships with local health institutions to offer immunization to 255 infants and children and conduct prenatal check-ups.



Gyan Bikash Community Library, Panauti, organized health outreach services after the earthquake.

Libraries that Help

Community Libraries are helping the people at risk group during Covid crisis. Some of the very recent ongoing relief activities of libraries during this crisis as reported by READ Nepal staff and published in local newspapers involved:

- Gaurishankar Community Library in Dolakha distributed safety equipments like soap, masks.
- Janajagaran Community has distributed medical equipment. The library partnered with National Discovery Centre, Lions Club to gather this resource.¹³
- A National level Community Library Relief Committee has been installed to help most affected communities. The fund has been contributed from 23 community libraries. Formed in May 2020 this committee has already helped 86 household affected by flood which occurred during the Covid crisis. Kamala Community Library has distributed a water tank, water and soap to Shaileshekar Orphanage so that 27 children in the orphanage can have access to regular hand washing facility during Covid.
- Gyanodaya Community Library has distributed food rations to 12 household of people with disabilities. The library coordinated with Apanga Nawajeewan Centre (Disability Newlife Centre) and local social workers.
- Sangam Community Library has distributed reading tables, mats and copy 35 sets books to Triguya school. Due to lockdown the school was not able to buy books from India, so the library provided the photocopy of the books with proper binding to be used by the students.
- Vidhyamandir Community Library has distributed food packages) to 20 household who lost their job. The library did this in collaboration of Ward President. She said "With small help someone will be able to light their stoves, act as ointment to heal the wound, the library is doing a wonderful job, the relief is reaching to the ones who need the most."¹⁴

- 13 **Sharma, 2020;** 'Translated: Library Resource Centre Nuwakot helped Medical Equipment including PPEs,' 2020
- 14 **Thapa, 2020**

- 15 Nepal retains its centuries-old caste system. Dalits, the discriminated people under this system, suffer from restriction on the use public amenities, deprivation of economic opportunities, and general neglect by the state and society. Dalits are discriminated against on the basis of caste and 'untouchability.' They are not only discriminated by the so-called higher caste people in the Hindu system, but also by people within the same caste. Dalit women suffer much more than Dalit men.

- Basgadi Community Library has contributed food rations to 20 household and Moti Community Library has distributed relief package to 13 family from at-risk groups including pregnant women, dalits¹⁵ and people with disabilities.
- Dipshika Community Library has distributed relief package to 17 people at old age home.
- Laxmi Narayan Library has provided relief package to 21 household who were badly affected by land slide during the Covid crisis.
- Janasewa Community Library has provided cloth to 30 orphans who were residing in local school.
- Some community libraries rented out its space to local entrepreneurs. The library earns income from this source for its regular operation. Gaurishankar Community Library waived NRs 203,000 (US\$1765) rental charge to local entrepreneurs were not able to gain any income due to Covid restrictions (Rato Gurans).

Community Libraries Providing Continued Support, Even After Disaster

READ supported community libraries were built in partnership with the community and have been functional years after its establishment. It is a community-based, community-owned, and community-led organization that focuses on catering services according to the community's needs. During disaster READ Nepal observed that community libraries are well-equipped to reach remote communities in times of crisis since these libraries already have deep relationships with the communities.¹⁶

Community libraries work closely with the community to identify community problems and seek solutions. Whenever there is a problem or any issue, the tendency is that the community turns to the library. Similarly, in the case of disaster, also community sought support from the library. When no other organizations come to the community,

it is experienced that the librarians are the ones who reach out to the affected community with the support when disaster occurs.

Since the community libraries are based in the local communities, they remain in the community to take care of the community even after the disaster. Disaster leaves the community with challenges, and the community libraries are the ones who continuously provide the help and take care of the affected communities even after the disaster.¹⁷ The community libraries took leadership to support and to rebuild the houses for the community members after the earthquake during recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, eg. Thokarpa Community Library in partnership with Survivors has helped to build 80 houses. Community libraries also constructed the Community Safe Spaces, the big open building where the community can reside and do the community gatherings when another infrastructure was not available. They also helped the farmers after the earthquake to yield more production, helped communities to receive the government support etc. In general, other agencies pack up as soon as the aid is distributed after the disaster, the libraries being community owned. Continue to assist people in the community sometimes years after the crisis abates.



Kids study outreach by a community volunteer during Covid-19 crisis.

Community Libraries Deliver Support for the Community's Need

Community libraries have been able to practice and experience to provide need-based services during the disaster. The librarians were able to provide services and support for the needs during and after the disaster. For example, during the earthquake, other organizations approached the rural community with food; however, the librarians

in the same area were well-informed that there was no food shortage. They said that there was enough grown food already in their field, but the real problem was the storage of the harvested food. They also identified that they needed materials for infants, and their mothers like baby food, clothes and mosquito nets. During Covid-19, the libraries living together with the communities helped them to identify the real need in particular communities and provide support accordingly. For instance, they ensured the food supply reached to needy people, arranged the immunizations to the kids. Not only this, they also provided support to the at-risk groups, for example, help people with disabilities, old-aged people etc to address their specific needs.



Inmunization in library during Covid-19 crisis.

A community library is critical to building a resilient community, one that bounces back quickly after a crisis. During the disaster, the Library Management Committee (LMC) helps the disaster affected people with the need-based relief effort; after the disaster, the library helps people, communities, and small businesses to get back on their feet and back to their lives. By offering the need-based services through partnerships, the libraries help to restore a sense of normalcy to the community, returning to a routine amidst all of the chaos. Embracing this role is another way the libraries continue to evolve to meet community needs and are valued as an essential community service.

Volunteerism is a fundamental source of community strength and resilience that exists in all societies throughout the world. The role of volunteerism, in general, and mobilizing and managing volunteers, in particular, are important components of any disaster risk management strategy that aims at fostering community recovery, strength, and resilience in vulnerable areas.¹⁸

A community library is a volunteer organization. At present, approximately 1400 people regularly volunteer every year in 67 READ supported libraries. During the time of disasters, community libraries have the capacity to mobilize volunteers to provide immediate support to affected people. During the 2015 earthquake, about 1000 volunteers were spontaneously mobilized to provide training, collect relief materials, coordination, and support. Approximately 1073 volunteers are being mobilized to provide support to affected people by the current Covid-19 crisis.

Mobilization of Social Capital

Social capital refers to local networks, trust, cohesiveness, relationships, and community norms. Community libraries are functioning as a bridge and link to provide government support and support of other organizations to the local community. Because the community libraries do not only create programs aimed at addressing the

17 **From Community Libraries to Earthquake Reconstruction**, 2015
 18 **UNVolunteers**, 2015
 19 **Massar**, 2018

20 **Putnam**, 1995
 21 **Shrestha**, 2013
 22 **Young**, 2018
 23 **Young**, 2018
 24 **Veil & Bishop**, 2014

needs and interests of the community, the program engages them in ways that provide opportunities to build relationships and trust.¹⁹ Because of various social interactions and social process in due course of construction and functioning of community libraries, social capital has been strengthened such as a network with a community group (youth group, children group, women group etc), community-based organizations (health post, Savings Cooperative, local clubs), politicians, social workers, local non-government and government organizations. These networks are the features of social life and trust that enable communities to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives.²⁰ During disasters, community libraries are able to mobilize social capital. In the 2015 earthquake, the community libraries partnered and networked not only with the other organizations within the districts but were also able to link with other national organizations. In the time of Covid-19, when gathering in places is not allowed, and the physical space of community libraries is closed, the community libraries are mobilizing the long-standing relationship with community members and local networks to help the communities to get through the Covid crisis.

The scope and role of community libraries are changing with times, promising that they remain dynamic sites for social change and progress depending on the various needs of the local community

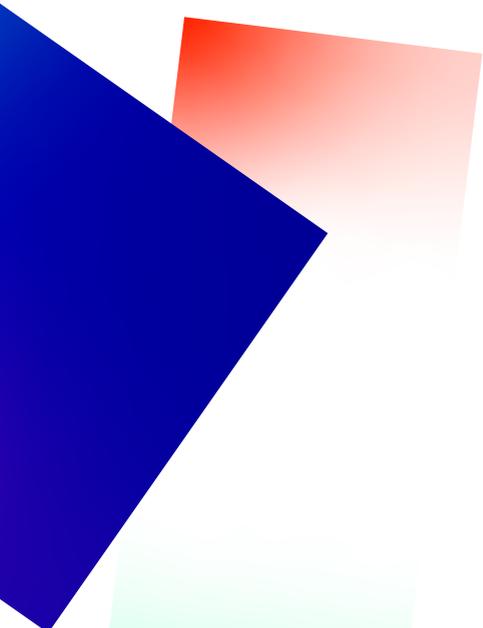
members in days to come.²¹ In the present context, the role of libraries in disasters has evolved, particularly regarding the space they can fill in community response.²² Existing literature on the role of libraries in disasters is ambiguous, not only because of a lack of research on the matter, but also because this role may vary, depending on the composition and layout of the communities they serve.²³ However, they are not consistently considered or acknowledged as part of a community's disaster response assets.

The changing scope of services provided by libraries has necessitated an increased focus on their role in disaster response. Libraries are not intrinsically different from other disaster response units in that respect: each public/community library comprises of individuals with a variety of attitudes and abilities, has various resources and facilities, and must operate within its unique community context. Librarians should also be included in the community disaster planning processes - at the very least - to provide them with a platform to communicate the nature and scope of services their libraries will be able to provide.²⁴

It is crucial to highlight sustainable, low-cost, community-led models that come from within nations in need, and help them understand that they have more power to

transform their communities than they or the rest of the world had realized.²⁵ The role of libraries as trusted sources of information and services is tacitly acknowledged. However, the guidance for preparedness or more structured reaction is minimal, preparation of local disaster readiness plans is needed so that libraries should be better equipped to act more effectively before, during, and after the disaster.²⁶

With the learning from the earthquake experience, READ Nepal, in partnership with the Arbeiter-Samaritan Bund (ASB: a German aid and welfare organization) and local organizations working in the sector of disaster response, has started with a program for local community libraries to understand disaster risk, strengthening disaster risk governance, investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response. The program's objective is to strengthen the resilience of disaster-prone communities by building their capacity to resist, absorb, respond to, and recover from the effects of disasters in an inclusive, timely, and efficient manner considering all community members' needs.



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About the author

Elizabeth Pierre-Louis was born and raised in Haiti. She is a librarian and a demographer. She studied Social Science, Population Science (Demography) at the University of Paris X-Nanterre and obtained her PhD in Demography in July 2004. She also obtained, with a Fulbright scholarship, her Master's in Library Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2003.

In 1997, she began to work at the Fondation Connaissance et Liberté (FOKAL), a Haitian Foundation of the Open Society Foundations, as a library trainer. In 2003, she became Library Program Coordinator at FOKAL, working to create a network with the then 35 community libraries. In 2009, she was a consultant at the Haitian Ministry of Culture for a public reading program in Haiti, centered in public schools. In 2012, she was head of the local organizing committee of the 42nd annual conference of the Association of Caribbean University, Research and Institution Libraries (ACURIL) in Haiti and the 2015-2016 ACURIL President. She is currently Program Coordinator at FOKAL.



Libraries in Haiti

– Beyond the Images and the Figures

by Elizabeth Pierre-Louis (Haiti)

Haiti is an independent nation since 1804. It shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean. It is the only French speaking country in the region and most Haitian speak Creole, the other official language of the country. In 2019, the Haitian population is estimated to 11,263,077 inhabitants.

After the January 12, 2010 earthquake, social inequalities were accentuated: 60% of the population lives with less than 2.41 US\$ per day. This very low economic revenue has major consequences on the economy: imports represent 51% which accentuate the commercial deficit (236.1 US\$ million for 2017-2018). Because of this large dependency on the external trade, the inflation rate is about 20%. Unemployment rates are high, about two thirds of the active population is unemployed. The population is very young: 52% is under 21 years old.

Primary education has developed in the last generation: attendance to schools has risen: 84% of children between 6 and 12 are in primary school. Since 2015 gender parity in primary school has been achieved. Over 55% of the population lives in cities in 2019 compared to 41% in 2003. This quick acceleration was done without the proper preparation of the cities which are overpopulated and ill equipped in all services, including libraries. The internet penetration rate is estimated to be 12%.

These country data set the context. The Haitian population is young, half live in cities, over 80% has been at least to primary school. The younger generations are more educated than previous ones, there is a great demand for education, and employment, seen as ways to achieved independence and dignity.

Libraries in Haiti

As mentioned before, the January 2010 earthquake had lasting consequences on national infrastructures. The library sector prior to the earthquake was quite limited. In 2010, there were nineteen municipal libraries under supervision of the National Library, ten Centres de lecture et d'animation culturelle (centers for reading and cultural activities), supervised by the Direction Nationale du Livre (National office for books), six Alliances Francaises (French cooperation) and thirty community libraries supported by Foundation Connaissance et Liberté (FOKAL). School libraries are not compulsory but exist in the more established schools to support the education system. But there is no linkage or supervision between national school programs and reading curricula.

University libraries are being developed by the dozen who are now part of the CORPUHA: Conference of rectors, presidents and directors of universities and institutions of higher learning in Haiti. There are more and



Biblio Taptap. Photo: JA, Acuril 2016.

more institutions of higher education in Haiti. The data presented earlier about the population age and access to learning explains the rapid evolution of this sector. In 2018, there were 138 institutions legally recognized by the Haitian Ministry of Education, but the lack of education standards and even infrastructure capacities have reduced the number of universities part of CORPUHA and affiliated to the Agence universitaire francophone (Agency for French speaking universities) to twelve. A recent article about student needs in the bachelor years (first years at the university) and the need to integrate better reading techniques at this level identifies a lack of interaction between professors, librarians, students and university management.

National Library – Annexes

The National library was established in 1940, by President Stenio Vincent, to preserve the literary heritage of Haiti. Six municipal libraries in the major cities were established in the same decade. The National Library is now an autonomous entity under the supervision of the ministry of Culture. Nevertheless, the public library sector was not a priority. A few statistics from the National Library from 2008:

- Less than 30 cities out of 137 have libraries;
- Very little respect for standards: outdated or no catalogs, little classification scheme;
- Less than 5000 square meters of equipment when the minimum should be 50 000;
- Less than 20 qualified professionals;
- No help for the local level (city council) to help libraries;
- Dispersion of the aid and no coordinated efforts.

The National library is in charge of the legal deposit of books, which is compulsory for any book published. The author must give five books in exchange to this record and number. The National Library also provides the ISBN number, though this number is not yet standardized for all categories of books. The National Library collection accessible to the public was estimated as 25 000 items in 2012.

In 2012, the municipal libraries decreased to eleven, due to national disasters (floods, hurricanes) and the lack of funds to reconstruct them. They were renamed : 'Annex of the National Library' to further assess their association with the network of the National Library.

National Office for Books, Direction Nationale du Livre

In 2005, la Direction Nationale du Livre (National Office for Books) was created by a governmental decree. It is a new entity in charge of the promotion of public reading and books. The National Library had been in charge of this sector as well as of the traditional role of conservation. In 1999 with the help of French Cooperation, a network of ten centers for reading and cultural activities (CLAC in French) were inaugurated in Haiti's northern peninsula. The National Office for Books, is also an autonomous organization under the supervision of the ministry of Culture. Many tensions resulted, since the role of the National Office for Books clearly stated that the management of state institutions for public reading should be their responsibility. The conflict between the National library and the National Office for Books finally was resolved by the renaming the municipal libraries "Annexes of the National Library"; as indicated previously.

There are currently fourteen centers for reading and cultural activities in Haiti as well as a library in their main offices in Port-



BiblioTaptap, Mobile Library.

au-Prince. This library holds about 5000 items and holds a library with games and toys as well. In 2011, this office worked on a national conference about books and reading in Haiti. The most important result of these multisectoral talks was the creation of a simplified classification scheme for public libraries, inspired by the Dewey decimal system but adapted to the Haitian context.

The directors of the National Library as well as the National Office for Books are directly appointed by the President of the Republic. This nomination attributes a more political dimension to this post that can be the results of bartering between different state institutions. This also creates a certain fragility within the institution resulting in the discontinuous activities and a difficulty to have a homogenous strategy. The National Office for Books also works with municipalities that are creating more and more libraries at this level.

Municipal and Heritage Libraries

Municipalities and local collectivities are nowadays opening libraries in cities to meet the demand of their citizens. The staff is directly under the supervision of the local government. This trend has produced about a dozen libraries. It is difficult right now to assess the size of their collection or their impact. They have been offering services, activities around books and reading. Most have a relationship with the National Office for Books (Direction Nationale du Livre). Their patrons are usually young students and school children. But they also house book signings, book fairs and festivals.

Haiti has two major private collections that are world renowned. These libraries are housed in Catholic congregations that have been preserving this priceless heritage collection.



They are member of regional academic networks such as the digital library of the Caribbean (Florida International University), Manioc (Université des Antilles). These partnerships gave them the possibility to start to digitize the archives and have the collection more accessible to researchers around the world.

Bibliothèque des Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne (St Louis de Gonzague):

- Created in 1912;
- Collection about colonial history and slavery but also history of Haitian literature: 10.000 documents;
- Plus 300 newspapers, Le Moniteur, Le Matin, Le Nouveliste;
- Digital archiving started in 2009;
- Partnership British library;
- Institutional grant from FOKAL;
- Working on digital newspaper collection.

La Bibliothèque Haitienne des Spiritains (BHS):

- Created in 1873;
- 25 000 items: 1 000 scientific periodicals, 500 maps and archival items;
- First editions from 19th and 20th century, oldest from 16th century;
- Digital efforts started in 2000, halted by the 2010 earthquake;
- Partners: Harvard University, l'UNESCO, l'Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie, le Conseil Régional de Martinique;
- Reopened in 2019.

French Institute and Community Libraries

The French Institute is the cultural side of the French Cooperation. Created in the 1940's as well, it was for decades a vibrant cultural institution, with a magazine (Conjonction) and a theater. It also supervises five Alliances Francaises located in the major cities of Haiti, most of them have a functional library with a multimedia aspect. The library of the French Institute held the largest collection of books (about 20000 items) and had a very dynamic set of activities and training. After the 2010 earthquake, it was decided to downsize the French Institute. The library was dismantled, put in storage for several years and finally donated to a large private school. A small pedagogical library was preserved to serve the students of the different French speaking classes offered by the Institute.

As described previously, the library services offered cannot meet the demands of the population which is young, urban and more educated than ever before. Youth groups started library initiatives in their neighborhoods, starting with book clubs, literacy classes, tutoring advice. This trend developed in the 1990's and culminated



Bibliothèque Amis lecteurs de Port Salut. Photo: Josué Azor, FOKAL.

in the creation of community libraries. These spaces vary from a one room in a school opened to the public to cultural centers offering library services. The collections also are not standard since they include donations, buying secondhand books, offering school manuals etc.

FOKAL Library Network

Created in 1995, *the Fondation Connaissance et Liberté / Fondasyon Konesans Ak Libète (Foundation for Knowledge and Liberty)*, is a well-recognized Haitian foundation supported mainly by Open Society Foundations, OSF, a worldwide network of foundations and initiatives created by philanthropist George Soros for the promotion of democratic

values. FOKAL also receives support from the European Union and the French Cooperation. The Foundation offers to local communities throughout the country and to organizations of civil society a large spectrum of activities in the fields of education, arts and culture and sustainable development.

The library program started in 1997 and in 2003 supported 47 community libraries situated all over the country. These small local libraries received financial support, donations of books and technical support. They are most often run by groups of young people supported by the community, located in the marginal districts of the capital, in small towns in the provinces and in the countryside.

To have such a diverse group of small libraries with different governing entities meant:

- divergent strategies and missions;
- different definitions about what a library meant;
- different ways of resolving conflicts;
- different ways of spending and building collections;
- No formal training in library science.

The earthquake severely damaged several buildings, dispersed many of the staff and destroyed most of the collections. FOKAL also decided to downsize the number of libraries in order to provide better standards and services to the different partners and communities. The library program now supports 17 community libraries and aims to make books and reading more accessible to readers, especially young people:

- 3 of them are managed directly by FOKAL which receive about 25 000 visitors per year, per library;
- 14 are community driven initiatives;
- 5 are located in rural areas without access to electricity or running water;
- In total those libraries entail 100 staff and over 100,000 books;
- Main partners are schools in the neighborhoods for library hours and after class visits.

Since 2009, we have been slowly computerizing the catalog. Now six libraries have an online portal that is searchable on the internet. These libraries have also an internet presence. This has been quite an accomplishment, between modifications of open source software, the many power outage especially outside of the capital city, the low internet penetration as well as time to enter all of the Haitian collection that was not published or integrated in international databases.

Training

There is no formal academic training for librarians in Haiti. Most professionals obtained their masters' degree abroad: The Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, the United States, Canada or France. Due to the political aspect of many of the state positions, there are seldom accredited librarians in managerial jobs in the public library sector. There has been several university level training for librarians in Haiti but these initiatives were not able to offer an accredited diploma or continue after the first cohort. FOKAL's library program devised its own training for library technicians that offers adapted content and hands on experience. This curriculum has also been developed on an online platform.

FOKAL library network in 2019

We will show two special projects.

First the Bibliotaptap BTT. The taptap is a colorful pickup truck used for public transportation in Haiti. The idea of a bookmobile was formulated after the earthquake by several institutions: the National Library, the National Office for Books, FOKAL and Libraries without Borders (France). The later applied for a European Union grant and that resulted in the creation of 3 bookmobiles that were quickly named Bibliotaptap. After the grant was finished, each National institution inherited a bibliotaptap. FOKAL's bibliotaptap goes to several schools that do not have a library, as well as main squares of the capital city. The bookmobile can hold about a thousand books.

Secondly, the Light Library. In order to help young people face the problem of public lighting in the Martissant neighborhood, a project of FOKAL offers portable lamps on loan, through the library of the Katherine Dunham Cultural Center (CCKD). The light library is a new project FOKAL is experimenting with young readers of the CCKD. Portable solar flashlights are lent through the library. Light can now be brought home.

It allows schoolchildren to study at night, since even in the capital city there are several power blackouts. In September 2016, a mission of Lighting Designers without Borders (Concepteurs Lumières Sans Frontières) presented the light-library project at the CCKD. The library-light project was launched in March 2017 by conducting two workshops with the library technicians and teenagers of the CCKD. Reports showed that young people get to enjoy 3 hours of lighting for reading and study. Furthermore, they take good care of the lamps that they can recharge during daylight before returning them to the library. This idea will be extended to other libraries of the FOKAL library network.

International Partnerships

FOKAL's first insight into international cooperation in librarianship was through the Mortenson Center for international library program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Three cohorts of library trainers attended several months-long training, visited libraries and even produced a training video. FOKAL has brought Haitian libraries into regional and international networks and supported strong participation in American Library Association (ALA), International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) and Association of

Caribbean University, Research and Institution Libraries (ACURIL) conferences. The current Library Program Coordinator was member of the second cohort of the International Network of Emerging Library Innovators, INELI, a Bill and Melinda Gate Foundation initiative to stimulate leadership among talented, young librarians.

Partnerships with Libraries without Borders (mobile library) and Littafcar (on-line information and training platform on French-language literature in Africa, Europe and the Caribbean and cooperation projects in Benin, Rwanda, Haiti and Belgium) demonstrated the leadership and ability to attract new partnerships.

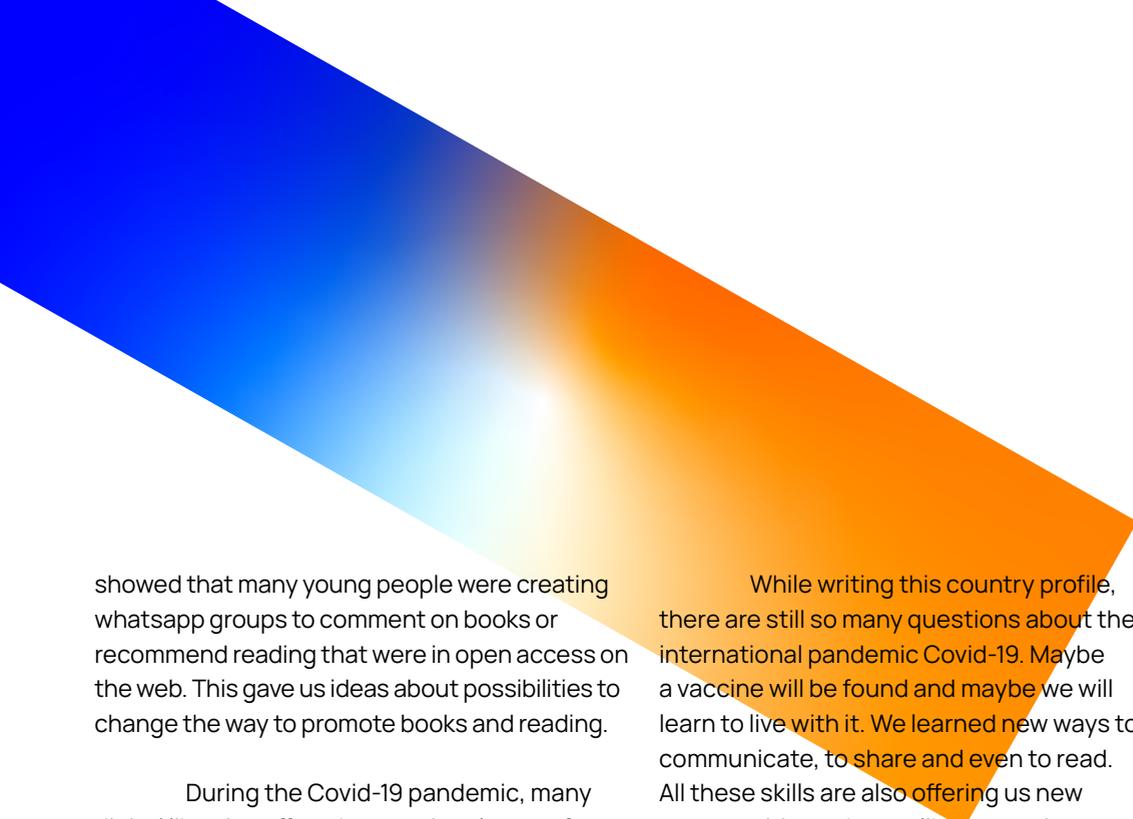
Youth and Aspiration: Trends for Tomorrow

FOKAL's youth initiative program develops the skills of debate from a citizen perspective. Debate teaches young people how to develop their critical thinking, their ability to express themselves, their capacity for independent research, and to discuss topics that affect their lives and communities in an atmosphere of tolerance, rationality and intellectual rigor.

Fourteen clubs throughout the country bring together about twenty young people each week, who discuss pre-established themes, prepare tournaments and discuss the economic situation. Young people also initiate debates using new technologies such as blogs or text messages. In 2014, 420 young people attended a consultation on topics such as citizenship, democracy, as well as gender relations or the economy and their perceptions of growing up as citizens of Haiti.

- Their views were published in the book 'Youth Voices' (Paroles de Jeunes) in 2015: the meetings were conducted in both national languages : French and Creole;
- There were 22 facilitators for 420 young persons;
- The gender equality was well respected with 48% M and 52% F;
- The regional participation was well achieved: 55% were from major cities.

Youth Voices gave us many insights about youth aspirations. We realized how they are following the major trends, using social networks to get information much more than traditional sources such as mainstream press or books. For example, book clubs are still active in the country. But it seemed that the ITC were taking the place of traditional books and magazines. A recent study at FOKAL's main library (Bibliothèque Monique Calixte)



showed that many young people were creating whatsapp groups to comment on books or recommend reading that were in open access on the web. This gave us ideas about possibilities to change the way to promote books and reading.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many digital libraries offered promotional uses of their collection. This is a very attractive idea but still needs librarian mediation to navigate these new surroundings, search the correct information, provide support (*yes, you can click on the link*). Human interaction is still key for better use of these platforms.

Obstacles and Perspectives

The obstacles can seem insurmountable. Compared to the lack of public funding and interest, the high cost of infrastructure and the high turnover of human resources and, the library sector's needs, demands are very modest. The continuous political and social instability not only causes physical destruction that hinder the nations already stretched reserves but also causes many young professionals to leave the country, looking for better prospects abroad. Nevertheless, our young patrons' curiosity and demands motivates us to continue to work for better libraries.

While writing this country profile, there are still so many questions about the international pandemic Covid-19. Maybe a vaccine will be found and maybe we will learn to live with it. We learned new ways to communicate, to share and even to read. All these skills are also offering us new opportunities to better library services.

Demographers when studying the age pyramid and structure of Haiti show that we are currently experiencing a unique opportunity. The population is slowly aging but the dependency rate is still quite low. This can be a demographic boost to our economy, culture, creativity but it could also become a demographic bomb leading to social unrest and instability. These are pivotal times and libraries have a crucial role to provide information, knowledge, as well leisure, creativity and escape from a life in which we are told to accept limited expectations. This is the utopia we must fight for, and hope that it becomes part of our reality.



Schoolclass at BiblioMobil. Photo: GH Rouzier, FOKAL.

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About the author

Gonzalo Oyarzún, Chilean librarian, holds a Master's degree in Management of Cultural and Creative Industries and has 20 years' experience in the public library field. He is currently working as an international consultant in the areas of libraries, promotion of reading and community engagement, and teaching in several universities in Chile and the United States. During his professional career, Gonzalo has participated in multiple innovative and award-winning projects, including the development of technology-based library services, reading promotion programs, and designing and implementing new physical as well as digital libraries.

Gonzalo's former positions include Head of the National System of public libraries in Chile, President of the Ibero-American Program of Public Libraries, Iberbibliotecas, Member of the National Council for Book and Reading of Chile, and Director of the Santiago Public Library, the biggest public library in Chile. He has given numerous presentations at international conferences and published articles in professional books and journals.



Communities in Bloom – Advances in Latin American Libraries

by Gonzalo Oyarzún
(Chile)

The history of Latin American libraries is recent. The first public libraries appear at the end of the 19th century. It was only in the second half of the 20th century that a network of public and community libraries began to be implemented throughout the Latin American continent. This also goes hand in hand with the history of the book, a late history in the region, with respect to Europe or the United States. The concept that we have today of a library, as a promoter of reading, a protagonist of culture, and an agent of change, has been barely three or four decades in Latin America. That is the reason why most countries have had to adopt policies that strengthen the local publishing industry, the implementation of digital libraries, and the creation of reading programs that foster the use of these resources.

The ways found in Latin America to implement libraries are diverse. Today it is possible to find libraries in all countries, regardless of their educational or economic level. This contribution aims to explore, through various examples, how libraries have found spaces in their respective countries, how they have responded to various challenges, how they have deployed their services, and how they have worked with the community. In a continent of

contrasts, library practices are also very diverse. We will see the case of metropolitan libraries operating in a big city like Sao Paulo, Brazil. We will see how community libraries can work in a small, remote, threatened indigenous community in the Sierra Nevada, Colombia. We will see how a National Library, usually linked to heritage and research, more focused on resources than on its users, is able to face adversity again and again and come out with strength, like the Phoenix bird, to become an exceptional service, very close to people. We will see an outstanding example of the great disruption that digital libraries have made, transforming the Latin American library scene. And we will see also how fundamental the networking is in empowering libraries and communities.

Libraries are key institutions in contemporary Latin America. The examples presented here are just a handful of what happens every day in a large city or remote village. Libraries are innovating to bring information, education, and culture to their communities. Above all, they are looking for an opportunity to improve people's quality of life, strengthening the community and increasing the social, economic, and political capital of all its inhabitants.

From Threat to Opportunity: The National Library of Peru

National libraries are often defined by their responsibility for acquiring and preserving all publications printed in a country. In general, most of its functions are focused on acquisition, storage, preservation, and digitization of its materials. Main users of national libraries are usually researchers and students. Services are not aimed at wide audiences, based on the prejudice that this type of library is only intended for the preservation of heritage and its expert custodians. It is very exceptional when a library of this type reaches out to most of the population. Until now.

The National Library of Peru (BNP) was created on August 28, 1821, exactly one month after the country achieved its independence from the Spanish monarchy. The independence leaders recognized the library as one of the indispensable institutions in the new republic, pointing out that ignorance was the strongest column of despotism, which is why Spain kept the thought of the Peruvian people in chains: to prevent them from acquiring knowledge of

their dignity. The history of this library has been crossed by calamity: in less than two hundred years it has been the victim of wars, robberies, fires, and earthquakes that have inflicted a tragic fate on it, causing the irremediable loss of many of its priceless collections. The worst of these events is, without a doubt, the devastating robbery that took place during the invasion of Lima by the Chilean Army between the years 1881-1883, within the framework of the War of the Pacific. During those long years of destruction and looting, civilians and especially priests were in charge of making a careful selection of the greatest jewels of the National Library to be stolen. Thanks to prominent Peruvian intellectuals, barely 738 volumes were saved, with a loss of more than 50 thousand books.

Currently, the library has two locations, both in the capital of Peru and open to the public. The original building is located on Avenida Abancay in the heart of Lima. The most modern library is located on Avenida de la Poesía, in the San Borja district. It is a building designed by the Peruvian architect Franco Vella and was the winner of the Golden Hexagon at the XII Biennial of Architecture of Peru in 2006. Its mission is like many national libraries in the world, which translates into rescuing, conserving, and disseminating the heritage of Peru, guaranteeing access to information for research, scientific and technological



development, and enjoyment of citizens. The National Library of Peru is also the governing body of all the public libraries in the country, be they regional, provincial, or municipal. This function is exercised through the National Library System, which must implement plans, programs, and actions throughout the country. Although this structure existed for many years in Peruvian legislation, its implementation until 2019 has been practically nil.

One year after its 200th anniversary, a new misfortune hangs over the National Library of Peru. On March 13, 2020, all the headquarters of the National Library and public libraries were closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, forcing all staff to confine themselves to their homes. Thus, the new administration of the library, under the direction of Ezio Neyra, who had taken office two months earlier, was left without a headquarters to work. Despite the fact that the National Library was oriented almost exclusively to attend to its users in person, from the first days of the crisis it took on the challenge of guaranteeing access

to information and culture for all the inhabitants of Peru, in ways that until then were completely new to the institution.

The new bet was multimodality. This implied making use of all available channels to serve diverse audiences. In less than a week, the staff began to design a strategy to reach the community. The extent of the pandemic and the length of the lockdown were still unknown. The first product of this strategy was launched on March 26, 2020, just a little over ten days after the general quarantine began in the country. From that moment on, different services and initiatives have been launched progressively: the series of talks 'Reading, library and community', 'Dialogues in times of change', the program 'History of Peru', the telephone reading service 'Hello BNP', the loan of books by delivery, and others.

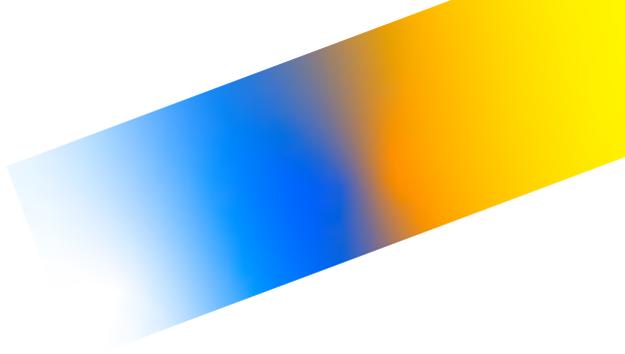
This strategy was based on three lines: remote services, services to the publishing sector, and academic and cultural programming.

Examples of Initiatives of the National Library of Peru During Covid

- Hello BNP: telephone reading service for older adults.
- Virtual reading clubs: for people with visual disabilities four times a month.
- Reading with tact: Virtual reading club for people with visual disabilities.
- Book delivery: librarians bring books chosen by citizens by phone or online.
- Chat with a librarian: Real-time consultation chat service with a specialist librarian.
- Chat with BNP Bot: Intelligent system for immediate question-answer; information about the services and collections of the BNP.
- Heritage digital library: access to more than seventy thousand digitized heritage documents.
- Digital Public Library: web platform and mobile application allowing Peruvian citizens, anywhere, free access to thousands of digital books
- Collaborative digital resources for children, teenagers, and people with visual disabilities: The themes and courses are connected to the Learning at Home Program and aimed at providing direct support to the Distance Education effort undertaken by the Ministry of Education.
- Reading, Libraries and Community: A series of talks on the social and cultural role of libraries.
- United voices: an initiative to promote reading to unite Peruvians through books to accompany users during the quarantine.
- Dialogues in times of change: Talks in which specialists analyze the changes generated by the pandemic.
- FilmForum BNP: Directors and experts in film productions in the country discuss and comment on their films.
- Peru History: Program of master videoconferences on the History of Peru with leading historians and researchers.



- Just as different: Conversation that addresses issues related to visual impairment and the challenges they have in society.
 - Books going, books coming: Reading cycle for boys and girls between 4 and 7 years old.
 - The “Transcripton”: Citizens enter a platform with 800 manuscripts from the 16th to the 19th centuries and transcribe them on the same website. Thus, contributing to the recovery of the handwritten memory of Peru.
 - BNP podcast: Various topics such as the role of public libraries, electronic books, Peruvian women’s literature in the bibliographic heritage, bookstores in the new normal, and reading from parents to children are covered.
 - How we Peruvians think of ourselves: A cycle of talks to reflect on the various identities from the perspective of different artistic disciplines.
 - Peruvian Literature Program: Cycle of virtual lectures on Peruvian Literature with prominent researchers.
 - Library voices online: Cycle of talks on libraries, library policies and the importance and work of libraries.
 - Our history, our memory: Campaign to publicize the documentary bibliographic heritage of Peru that the BNP guards.
 - Meeting point: Cycle of talks aimed at schoolchildren, teachers, and the community that raises dialogue and reflection on transformative educational projects.
 - BNP tips: A series of videos made by BNP workers to give advice for citizens regarding the care of books and the organization of libraries.
 - Chess classes: Workshop with a playful approach aimed at children, adolescents, and young people.
- All these contents are transmitted and stored on the National Library platforms, on videoconferencing platforms, social networks (mainly Facebook and YouTube), Spotify, as well as by radio and television in Peru.



Perhaps one of the most significant indicators is having reached about 10 million people, who have seen or reproduced the contents in almost the entire Peruvian territory and in more than 40 countries around the world. In other words, the library's users increased thousands of times in relation to the face-to-face public (less than 500 thousand people a year), reaching audiences that the BNP had never reached, either due to ignorance or geographic limitations.

Living Libraries: The Experience of the Metropolitan Libraries of São Paulo, Brazil

Metropolitan libraries have been key to the construction of library systems in Latin American countries. They are models for small libraries, they are spaces for laboratory, rehearsal, and experimentation, they serve as showrooms of good practices that can be imitated by other libraries. These great libraries are playing a key role in advocacy towards the national and local authorities that are not familiar with the work of libraries or the impact that they can have in the communities.

In Mexico City or Bogotá, in Medellín or Santiago, in Antofagasta or Coyhaique, in La Serena or São Paulo, these libraries are the contemporary answer to the needs of culture, information, recreation, and permanent education with Latin American identity that today's citizens demand.

The libraries of the city of São Paulo sustain that reading is an essential tool for the full implementation of citizenship. Their mission is to encourage and promote among the population, especially the low-income communities, and people in a vulnerable situation, opportunities for access, discussion, and creativity based on reading, literature, and culture, in their various means and forms. The state government has handed over the administration of their libraries to a nonprofit social-cultural organization: SP Leituras, Paulista Libraries and Reading Association. This is a model that has also been implemented in other cities of the continent, such as Bogotá, where the libraries are run by Fundalectura. SP Leituras oversees planning, organization, implementation and management of programs, projects, and cultural centers, associated with reading.

A place for a library was The House of Detention of São Paulo, popularly known as Carandiru. Earlier it housed more than eight thousand prisoners, being considered at the time the largest prison in Latin America. It was



Brazil, Biblioteca de São Paulo. Photo: Equipe SP Leituras.

the site of the Carandiru massacre on October 2, 1992.¹ 111 prisoners were dead, and 37 more were injured. Ballistic evidence showed that 515 bullets were fired at the prisoners, which was considered a major human rights violation. Another place, for decades, was the garbage deposit of a company of warehouses in São Paulo. Where about one thousand people circulated regularly collecting remains of food and packaging. It also served as a reservoir for dredged waste from the Pinheiros River. The worst places in the world can be great places to establish a library.

Carandiru prison was deactivated and partially demolished in 2002, being replaced by the Youth Park. In that park, located in the north of the city, the São Paulo Library (BSP) was opened on February 8, 2010. Inspired by the Santiago Library of Chile and the best practices adopted by public libraries in the country, BSP has been offering equipment and spaces that allow the population to access production and cultural expression. Also, as a laboratory of practices in the area of librarianship and information science, it permanently hosts courses and events organized by the State

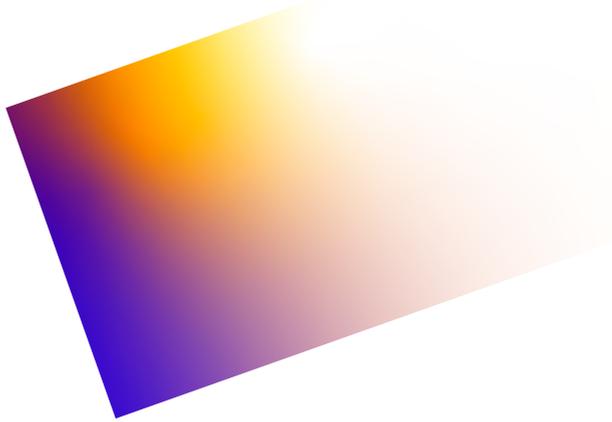


Brazil, Biblioteca Parque Villa-Lobos. Photo: Equipe SP Leituras.

System of Public Libraries (SisEB), aimed at training the teams of more than 900 public libraries, members of the system. In addition to internal activities, its team promotes reading in São Paulo vulnerable communities.

The library brought dignity to the citizens and the inhabitants of the neighborhood. Since its activities started, over 8 years ago, it has enabled the recovery of the self-esteem of the residents and revitalized the area with people coming from other parts of the city. The library is used as an experimental field for reading, cultural and citizenship practices communicating with the other public libraries of the state through the SisEB. Its operation is based on a very simple assumption: to shift the focus from the collection to the community it serves. Shifting the focus to people and community entails:

- Autonomous construction of knowledge – providing space and tools for each one to access, bring, discuss, and create knowledge.
- Recognition of knowledge – understanding that every visitor carries with them knowledge that can be exchanged with other people;
- 'House of the Words' – offering space and materials for access, discussion and creation of discourse and literature;
- Cultural Square – offering a space that favors cultural connections, characterized by freedom and diversity in a safe environment;
- 'Third Place' – space for promotion and respect for the freedom of the people;
- Constant learning – a virtuous circle of prototyping of new models that can be tested in the field.



As Rebecca [...], user of Biblioteca de São Paulo, said: 'The library is a space for social inclusion, for you to build relationships. It is really a meeting point. I have never been discriminated here. I have always been respected and warmly welcome. It is a place where people reconnect with themselves. And gain new perspectives. It is a place for restructuring. It is a starting point. I am very grateful for having this environment, for the meaning it has in my life. It would be great if everyone had access to places like these.'²

The old garbage deposit was turned into a park. Inaugurated in 1994 and named after the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos, Villa-Lobos Park has become an example in the recovery of degraded urban areas. This public place concentrates the most diverse activities of leisure, sports, and culture, with a strong sustainable and ecological credentials. The Villa-Lobos Park Library – BVL is a benchmark in the revitalization of public spaces, restoring the civic pride of the people living nearby, and an integration between a cultural asset and a city park. It was set up for families looking for a place where they could find leisure opportunities free of charge as well as young people and residents of the underprivileged population from the surrounding area (Jaguare district, Favela da Linha, Favela do Nove and the Cingapura Madeirit public housing complex).

The hallmark of the BVL is the variety of services and programs it provides to local people, giving them opportunities to connect with each other through reading and knowledge. The library is a groundbreaking development in services and programs focused on the user. It provides a diversified collection of books, media, toys, traditional and video games that are updated on a weekly basis free of charge in its area of over 4,000 m². It presents a cultural program of more than 900 events a year and focuses on improving the lives of thousands of people. The actions and services are organized not only to provide access to literature, culture, and knowledge but also to encourage debate and creative activities. Among the outstanding initiatives, we would highlight: teaching older people to use a smartphone and digital applications; providing space for musical groups from the outlying areas; helping parents and caretakers to read with their small kids; yoga exercises; free foreign language classes; entertaining workshops on cooking and literature for children and adults; reading clubs; workshops for the production of texts, books, and videos; cinema and dozens of other attractions. The library also runs a co-working program with startups creating content or social and environmental entrepreneurial initiatives.



Guatemala, Biblioteca Ventanas (Chiché).

Inclusion is a key pillar in the library. The visually impaired have access to all the books in the collection through a device that reads the pages and automatically turns them into audiobooks. In addition to spoken books (works that have the lines interpreted by actors), the library provides books in Braille and an automatic page changer. Only one room in the building maintains the requirement that people remain silent. The idea of the library in São Paulo is to have as few rules as possible. As a great cultural meeting place, the BVL has become a second home for thousands of people by allowing those who use it to fully participate in developing their abilities, have total freedom in using the collection to get to know other people and meet and swap experiences.

Biblioteca Parque Villa-Lobos is an example of the contribution to the human development of its community by offering programs for people of all ages, increasing the social, cultural, digital, and economic capital. All the programs in the library contribute to community development, especially as the library patrons are from all socioeconomic ways of life, and the program has been developed to meet the needs of all members of the community.

Daniel user of Biblioteca Parque Villa-Lobos' says: Having a co-working space is fundamental, because it opens doors. Even more, it gives people hope. It helps the people who live here and the people who come here to contribute to society in a very interesting way. It really is a public library for all people, of all ages. Knowledge does not involve only reading books. It involves work sharing. This is the idea. And this is the perfect place to do that, I believe.¹³



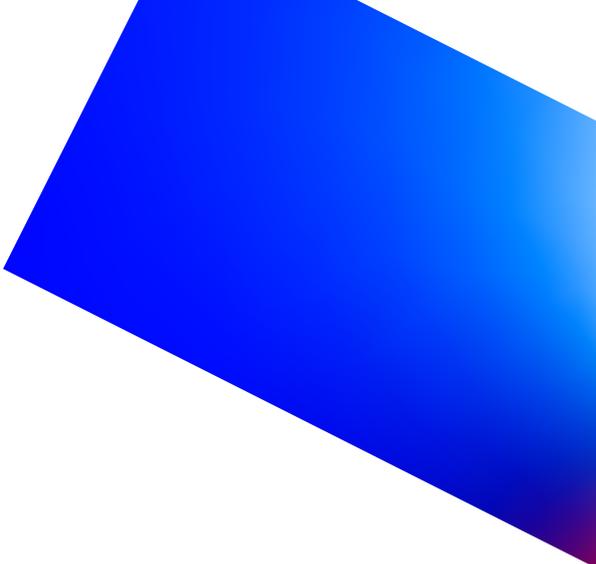
- 3 **SP Leituras**, 2019. Institucional BVL. [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)
- 4 In 1996, the Guatemalan Government and the guerrilla group Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit URNG, signed the so-called Firm and Lasting Peace Agreement, ending 36 years of armed conflict in the country.

Libraries Weaving Networks: Guatemala Libraries

The development of libraries in Central America has been uneven and, in many cases, insufficient. This is due, most likely, to the violence suffered in dictatorships and civil wars, added to the existing poverty and inequality. After decades of military confrontation in most countries, Central America evolved from a culture of war to one of peace; and from a culture of peace to a democratic culture, trying to increase and improve its levels of sustainable human development. The Guatemalan cultural scene is characterized by its multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual dimension;

multicultural because each of the four *pueblos* of the country has its own cultural expressions and a worldview that gives it its identity. Multi-ethnic due to the 25 ethnic groups that make it up: 22 of Mayan origin, a Garífuna, a Xinka, and a mestizo or Ladino. Multilingual for the 25 languages that are spoken in the national territory and that coincide with ethnic diversity, although Spanish is the common language. And the book, reading, and library ecosystem operates in this rich context.

In the field of libraries, the creation of public libraries in Guatemala is related to the signing of the Peace Accords⁴, improving education, making the population literate, and supporting the disarmament process. Although Guatemala does not have public policies that promote the sustained creation of public libraries, there is legislation that indicates that each municipality must have its own library.



And while there is no solid public library system, the development of private and community initiatives, not for profit, that develop libraries as educational spaces and development agents has been encouraged. In 2000, the Riecken Foundation began its work in Honduras and Guatemala. This foundation is defined as a non-profit organization that has the mission of 'promoting democracy and prosperity in Central American communities, through social and educational institutions that awaken a spirit of discovery and community social participation.' And, within the framework of this foundation, community libraries were the ideal means to achieve this mission. The drivers with which these libraries work are:

- Motivation to read for pleasure
- Access to information and self-study
- Youth leadership
- Access to information technology
- Social action and participation
- Cultural diversity

The libraries have been articulated in a cooperation model in which the community, the municipality, and the Riecken Foundation participate. They are a meeting place for the community and a space for creation of knowledge and culture, for communication and cooperation and for citizen training. To build relationships between libraries, networking has been strengthened by establishing an

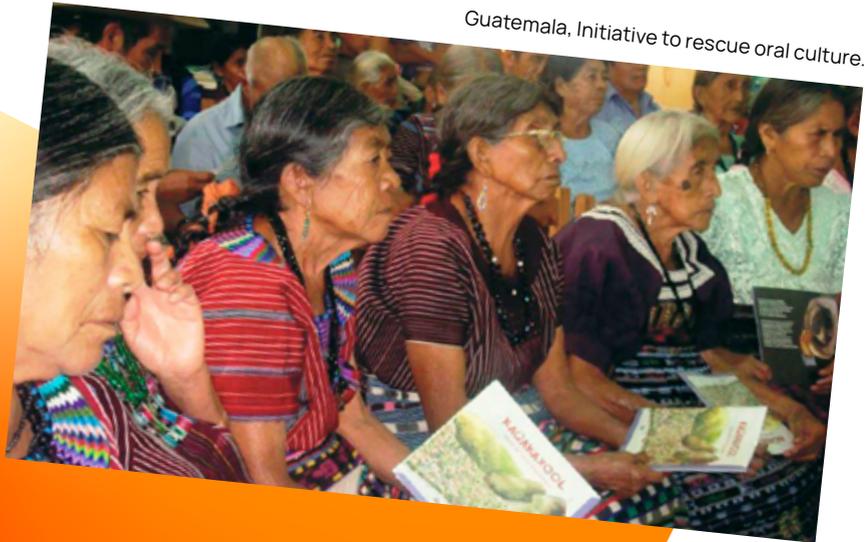
associative structure called the Association of Innovative Libraries 'Weaving Wisdom'. It is made up of members of the boards of directors of the library network. Its purpose is to represent, promote, and defend the common rights and interests of libraries before local governments and other instances. It also seeks to strengthen the sustainability of community libraries. At the end of 2016, the government of Guatemala has given legal recognition to the library network as a civil association, thereby seeking self-regulation and ethical principles that promote community libraries.

All community-based public libraries promote common drivers with which they work, however, each of them is characterized by promoting projects and services according to the needs of their community, appropriating the processes of social development:

1. Entrepreneurship and business (empowerment of women)

Community libraries promote local social entrepreneurship initiatives that address the human, organizational and social capacities of women in rural communities of Guatemala.

Guatemala, Initiative to rescue oral culture.



2. Youth leadership development

Libraries encourage creativity and critical thinking in adolescent girls, as it is an essential element for having future citizenship.

3. Early stimulation of reading and nutrition

The Open Windows to the Future community library leads the implementation of an early stimulation program for reading with a nutritional approach to children to develop their physical and psychological capacities to the maximum.

4. Mediation in reading and public education

Community libraries promote and support the formation of a new citizenry with informational and communication skills, critical thinking skills, and social coexistence.

5. Cultural identity

'Discovering our traditions through ancestral stories' was born as an initiative to rescue oral culture in communities. The cultural activities based on the local identity has the primary objective of strengthening, rescuing, and promoting the Mayan and/or local culture in communities where a community library is established.

6. Mapping cultural, natural, and archaeological resources.

The objective is to sensitize communities about the importance of the conservation of sacred places and natural resources by promoting historical and cultural knowledge. Several groups of children and adults have been trained in mapping the natural, sacred, and archaeological resources of each community.



Where Knowledge is Stored, Created and Recreated: Kankuaka Community Library, Colombia

Community libraries have been a key factor for social and cultural development in Latin America. These types of libraries have emerged at the initiative of their own communities, many times without government support and sustained only with their own resources. This makes them, many times, concrete expressions of the most urgent needs and demands of the members of these communities. Libraries that support the education of children, that address the environmental problems, that defend the rights of women, that generate sustainable practices for the economic improvement of their inhabitants. Many of these libraries are examples of innovation, community empowerment, and social change. They can be found everywhere: in the Sierra de Oaxaca, in Mexico, in the indigenous areas

of Honduras and Guatemala, in the rural sectors of Cajamarca, in Peru, in every city or town in Argentina, deep in the Amazon in Brazil.

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, in Colombia, has been considered by United Nations scientists as one of the most irreplaceable natural environments on earth. This led UNESCO to declare it a Biosphere Reserve and a World Heritage Site in 1979. The ecosystem is home to countless forms of life and is home to several indigenous communities. For them, the mountains of the Sierra Nevada are sacred. However, there are currently more than 100 applications to develop the extractive mining industry on a large scale. This will severely alter the climate and the ecosystem. Along with these economic interests, armed actors have appeared that attack the coexistence and indigenous cultures of the region, who have suffered massacres, displacement, and assassinations of their leaders.

In this environment, located in the Kankuamo Indigenous Reservation, is the Kankuaka Public Library. The meaning of the word 'Kankuaka' is 'the place where knowledge is stored, created, and recreated'. The notion of a library in the Kankuama culture is not new, on the contrary, it is linked to the territory. In their own words, libraries are those places that keep the code of memory and that,



rather than keeping it, are reminiscences and recreations that are not seen as elements of the past but are part of the present.

In the Kankuama culture, reading is linked to smells, flavors, feeling contact with the earth, sowing, communication with each of the elements of the environment, deep union with nature, understand the way of life of each one of the beings with whom the territory is shared. And it is also linked to writing, to thinking, to observing each of the elements that inhabit around it. That is why the Kankuaka Library has promoted books and the environment at the same time. In this context, in addition to the traditional tasks of a library related to reading, writing, education, and culture for its community, various technological projects have been developed that have made it possible to link Kankuaka with the world and to be declared one of the best libraries in Colombia.

Guided by librarians, children go out into the community to gather information. They interview older people, collect photographs and traditional objects, and capture scenes from village life and the environment on camera and video. Back at the library they write stories, create exhibitions, and draw maps of the community. This concerns Kanduruma-lab 'Learning by doing the community', which comes from a native tradition. As the encounters are not on a routine basis but obey the times of the Sierra, one person said that it was like the Kanduruma, an apparition, spiritually prowling the community. This gave rise to a short film, 'El guardián de la Sierra'⁵, a work that they did in the Kankuaka Library during the holidays, and that gives an account of the work of these children. This initiative received the EIFL Award for innovation.⁶ The initiative has strengthened links between the generations.

- 5 **Cabildo Indigena Kankuamo**, 2015. El Guardian De La Sierra. vimeo.com
- 6 **EIFL**, 2017. Protecting The Environment: Innovation Award. eifl.net



Different generations are sharing knowledge about how to develop the community, and how to protect this great ecosystem', said Souldes Enrique Maestro Montero, head of the library. During 2020, under the guidance of the elders of the community, Kanduruma-lab begins a new stage of multiplying the message of the elders. During the pandemic, videos, a podcast, and the implementation of 30 family gardens have been produced. The orality, stories, and creativity of the community go beyond the barriers of physical distancing.

video and audio productions focused on promoting indigenous rights, land protection, oral traditions, sustainable development, food sovereignty, and how-to live-in harmony with the local ecosystem. They create five radio programs that will air on Radio Tayrona Estereo, a short video, along with launching a blog and podcast channel for youth actions. They will also facilitate capacity building workshops on media literacy to over 400 youth residing in the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta.

With the support of the Kankuaka Public Library, youth receive media literacy education and awareness on the environment and Kankuamo culture. The youth are developing

- 7 **Bibliotecaspublicas.gob.cl**. n.d. Sistema Nacional De Bibliotecas Públicas. [↗bibliotecaspublicas.gob.cl](http://bibliotecaspublicas.gob.cl)
- 8 **Bibliometro**. n.d. Bibliometro. [↗bibliometro.cl](http://bibliometro.cl)

Virtual Readers, Real Communities: The Digital Public Library of Chile

With a presence in almost 97% of the country, Chile's public libraries are today the main national cultural network, both due to its geographical coverage and the volume of users it serves and the services it provides. With more than 510 public libraries, 60 loan points, and 50 mobile services and 71 prison libraries and with about 8 million bibliographic collections and more than 3,000 connected computers, these library services are mainly dependent on the municipalities for buildings, personnel, and financial resources for operation and maintenance.

The state body responsible for coordinating and providing guidelines for the development of libraries in Chile is the Public Libraries National System of Chile, SNBP, a body dependent on the National Service of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Cultures, Arts, and Heritage.⁷ Local governments sign an agreement with the SNBP, by virtue of which this service aims to contribute with the respective libraries in:

- Delivery, on loan, of bibliographic collections
- Technical advice on norms and standards of operation of a public library
- Training and capacity building for library staff
- Implementation of the National Reading Plan
- Implementation and development of innovative projects and programs for libraries.

The public library model in Chile is based on an alliance between local governments and an institution of the central administration, promoting their integral development and seeking to guarantee that, regardless of their geographic location, gender, age, socio-economic and educational level, race or creed, every citizen can access the book, reading, and culture. The development of Chilean public libraries in the last twenty years is based on three axes: community integration; modernization of services and strengthening of personnel.

Among the innovative initiatives, with greater success and recognition of the SNBP at a national and international level, we could mention:

- Bibliometro: a network of book loan points located in the Metro stations of Chile capital City, Santiago. This initiative, created in Chile in 1996, has been replicated in different countries.⁸

- 9 **Bpdigital.cl**. n.d. Bpdigital. [↗bpdigital.cl](http://bpdigital.cl)
- 10 **Jovenesprogramadores.cl**. n.d. Jovenes Programadores. [↗jovenesprogramadores.cl](http://jovenesprogramadores.cl)
- 11 **Sistema Nacional de Bibliotecas Públicas**. 2015. Taller De Jóvenes Programadores De Biblioredes Recibe Premio A La Innovación Científica 2015 - Sistema Nacional De Bibliotecas Públicas. [↗bibliotecaspublicas.gob.cl](http://bibliotecaspublicas.gob.cl)
- 12 **Contenidoslocales.cl**. n.d. Contenidos Locales. [↗contenidoslocales.cl](http://contenidoslocales.cl)
- 13 **Biblioredes.gob.cl**. n.d. Biblioredes. [↗biblioredes.gob.cl](http://biblioredes.gob.cl)
- 14 **Gill, P.**, 2001. The Public Library Service: IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines For Development. [↗PDF](#)

- Digital Public Library: innovative in its kind, it is a library that is available to all the inhabitants of the country and to Chileans abroad.⁹
- Young Programmers¹⁰: initiative aimed at bringing programming closer to people, as a tool that contributes to empowerment and personal and community development. This initiative received the 2015 Annual Prize for Innovation in Science Education in the ICT category, awarded by the Young Science Foundation and UNESCO.¹¹
- Local Content portal: a platform where public libraries create local content in multiple formats: text, images, audio, video. The topics covered include local history, poetry, music, paintings, etc. The initiative won the Stockholm Challenge Award in the culture category in 2006.¹²

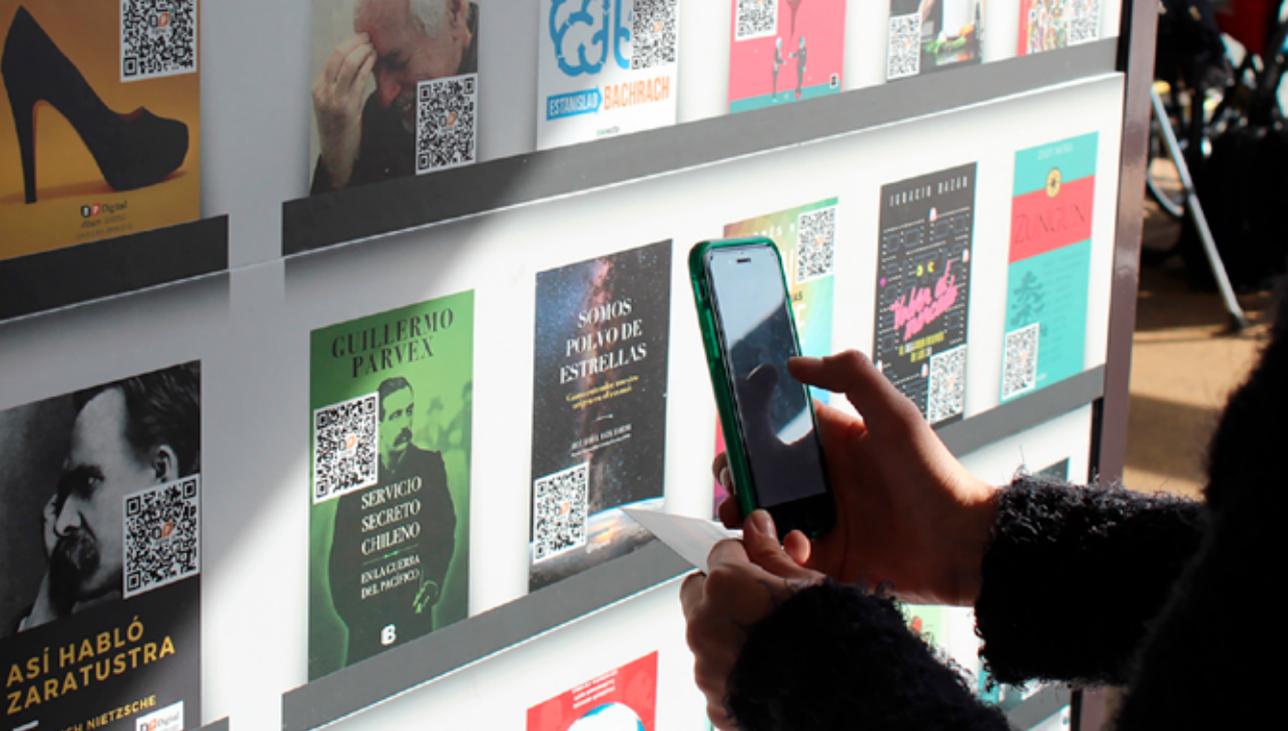
The most extensive and in-depth information, digital literacy and basic ICT skills training program developed in Chile has been carried out precisely by public libraries, through the creation of a program called Biblioredes.¹³ This program seeks to make public libraries an effective space to combat the digital divide, educate the community, and provide tools that empower citizens socially, politically, and productively.

Simultaneously, an intense program of cultural extension is carried out: 'Libraries are more than books.' Given that public

libraries make up the largest cultural network in the country, this program aims, through artistic activities specifically developed for this purpose, to support and promote the work of public libraries, promoting the development of cultural activities, diversifying the matrix of services offered, generating new audiences and strengthening the loan of books. Theater, dance, music, poetry, political debate, exhibitions, workshops are some of the actions that are carried out from this program.

The impact of Chilean public libraries could be summarized as:

- 82% of the users of public libraries live below the poverty line.
- In 1 out of every 3 communes in the country, the public library is the only place with free community access to the Internet.
- Libraries receive more than twelve million visits annually.
- 65% of the goals of the National Reading Plan are carried out in public libraries.
- More than 2 million unique visitors have been attended, with more than 11 thousand Internet access sessions being carried out daily
- 500 thousand people have developed their digital skills through the courses offered by libraries, which contribute 45% to the digital literacy goals of the Chilean Government
- More than 15 thousand people trained via e-learning every year



First digital library in an airport in Latin-America (Chile).

- More than 12 thousand web pages with local content have been generated by users through the Local Content portal.

The Digital Public Library

What is a digital library? In an article by Stephen M. Griffin on digital library initiatives and quoting the Santa Fe Workshop on Distributed Knowledge Work Environments¹⁴, he points out: '... the concept of a digital library is not only the equivalent of digitized repertoires with library management methods. Rather, it is an environment where collections, services, and personnel come together that favors the complete cycle of the creation, dissemination, use, and preservation of data, for information and knowledge.'

The Chilean Digital Public Library is an initiative developed by the SNBP. Through a web platform and a mobile application for Android and iOS, it allows readers free access to almost 40,000 digital books and audiobooks, in English

and Spanish, for all types of audiences: children, youth, and adults. Registration is automatic and it is only necessary to have a valid identity card to request any book on loan and start reading on a computer, tablet, or smartphone.

Access to the BPDigital, both in its web version and in its application, is intuitive, facilitating its use by children and adults. Within its titles, you can find books with current copyright and in high demand in bookstores, bestsellers, current affairs books, great classics, National and Nobel Prize winners for Literature, children's stories, video stories, and audiobooks. It is a free service aimed at all the inhabitants of the Chilean territory, without distinction and, therefore, also available to immigrants. Likewise, it is available for Chileans residing abroad. To facilitate the use of the platform, the BPDigital has an APP (bpdigital), which allows users to access the books from any device, including their cell phone. Currently, downloads to mobile devices, whether tablets or smartphones, correspond to 89% of total readings. The loan rates for this library are significantly upward:



Children at work, Guatamala.

This growth rate has allowed this service to become the public library that lends the most books in Chile in the sixth year, despite having a limited budget for the purchase of bibliographic material.

Given its results, this library been the recipient of three very important national awards: "Avonni" National Innovation Award 2016, Alonso de Ercilla Award 2017 from the Chilean Academy of Language and the first prize in Funciona! 2019, the Contest for Public Innovation.

Year	2013 (Nov-Dec)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 (until August)
Annual Loan	727	4.370	13.330	113.575	134.819	301.427	393.890	590.835
Increase		501%	205%	752%	19%	124%	31%	50%

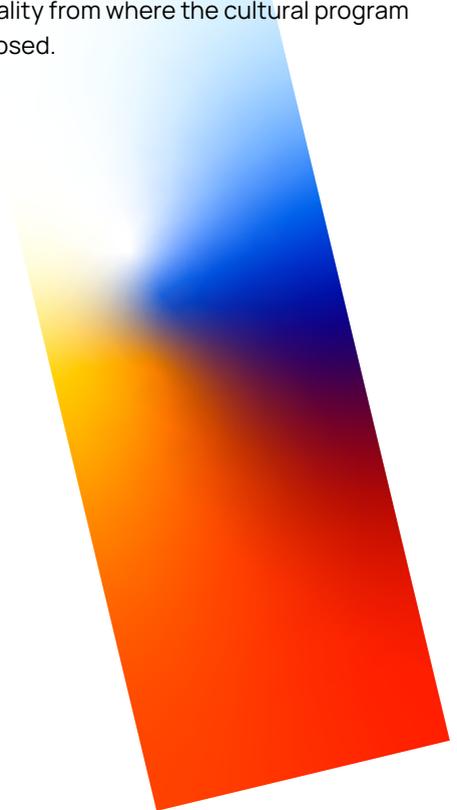
Traditional Public Library Versus digital Public Library?

It could seem that the digital public library is displacing the traditional public library, the one that is located in neighborhoods and municipalities throughout the country. Indeed, the digital public library can, through computers or mobile devices, reach most of the inhabitants of the territory and make an extensive bibliographic collection available to them, without having to attend the municipal libraries. What happens is that today public libraries are something else. As the IFLA/ UNESCO Public Library Manifesto points out, it should be in focus to many other tasks.¹⁵

Entities such as the public library are organizations that are born from the management of their own community, as proposed in the 'Guide for the study of users and the community in public libraries', published by CERLALC. Therefore, it will be essential to understand the community and its territory, the main community actors, and the tools to gather information about users and their needs. And for this, it is essential to get to know each other, get to know others, participate in

community organizations, invite those who do not participate, and design services together with the community itself.

Mediation and dynamization, in this sense, constitute a key area for the success of the public library as a physical space. For this, the strengthening of the capacities of those who work directly with the public is required, through a continuous training program that facilitates the generation of skills, competencies, and leadership necessary for the locality from where the cultural program is proposed.



About the author

Spaska Tarandova is executive director of the Global Libraries in Bulgaria. She has been working in the library field for more than 28 years, mostly at Sofia City Library, including as a deputy director for 5 years. Since 2015, she has been serving as an executive director of the Global Libraries – Bulgaria Foundation (GLBF) that operates with a network of 960 public libraries in Bulgaria to provide free access to computers, internet and information for all.

Spaska has experience as a trainer in library management, advocacy, fundraising and project management. In 2011 she joined in the 'Librarians of Tomorrow: Communication and Leadership' program at the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In 2012-2015 she was the Bulgarian participant in the International Network of Emerging Library Innovators (INELI), sponsored by Gates Foundation. She is boardmember of the Bulgarian Library and Information Association and member of the Standing Committee of the IFLA Public Libraries Section.



Public Libraries in Bulgaria – Active Participants in Public Life by Spaska Tarandova (Bulgaria)

The library sector in Bulgaria acts as a unifier: 2,762 public libraries (national, regional, municipal and community centers); 66 university and college libraries; 1,065 school libraries.¹ The Bulgarian National Library has a collection of over 7.8 million library units. More than 7.5 million different editions are kept in the library collections of all other libraries. The library services are used by more than 1 million citizens, with over 11.5 million visits annually and over 17.6 million borrowed library units.² Library services are provided by only 4,286 librarians.

The challenges of the 21st century are present in all areas: policymaking, economics, culture, education, and social relations. We are now talking about changing economic models and a new economy in which knowledge and creativity are the drivers of productivity and economic growth, information technology and training are at the core of economic productivity and prosperity.

Over the last decade, Bulgarian society has undergone serious transformations in all areas which created difficult issues, with the 2008-2014 economic crisis being a serious cause. The following problematic areas have been identified within the development of society: (1) Population decline, population aging, increase in the uneven territorial distribution of population, i.e. people tend to concentrate in the big cities thus depopulating entire

villages and reducing the rural population; (2) Serious educational issues, increase in the illiterate population, high dropout rate in the education system, low level of reading and comprehension skills, a significant percentage of young people do not study or work; (3) High poverty rate, social groups in isolation, increase in the population whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian, with the general picture of decline in total unemployment, it is a worrying fact that it is the highest among young people; (4) Limited opportunities for access to the global network, lack of digital literacy in a large part of the population and lack IT or the Internet.

Libraries cannot be left behind when addressing these problematic issues and therefore, over the last 10 years, a discussion has started in our country on the issues of transformation of different types of libraries. The functioning of libraries is regulated by different texts in many regulatory acts governing public relations in various sectors. Here, I will only mention the most important ones governing the relations between the state and local authorities, with a focus on the libraries: the Public Libraries Act (2009), the Act on Mandatory Deposit of Copies of Printed and Other Works (2001), the Decree No. 163 of the Council of Ministers on the transformation of cultural institutes into regional libraries and museums, and the Act on Community Centers (1996).



European Commissioner Mariya Gabriel, during Code Week.

Despite the significant demographic and social changes, the library network has not been reformed since 1972, when after the adoption of Decree No. 72 of the Council of Ministers an attempt was made to create a Unified Library System built entirely on the principle of hierarchy. With the adoption of the Act on Community Centers in 1996, this system was negated regarding the public libraries. After long years of efforts made by the Bulgarian Library and Information Association, the Public Libraries Act was adopted in 2009, which is aimed at regulating the activities of various types of public libraries which are the most numerous in the country (approximately

3,300 on that moment) and providing library services on a territorial basis by procuring library materials in all fields of knowledge. The effect of the adoption of this special act cannot yet be experienced in full because the development of the envisaged statutory instruments has been delayed over time, and the Standard for Library and Information Services adopted in 2015 has not been funded and is practically not implemented yet.

- 1 According to NSI data, 2013.
- 2 According to NSI data, the population of Bulgaria is 5,125,407 people. nsi.bg

- 3 Register of Public Libraries with the Ministry of Culture. bibliobg.com
- 4 [PDF Final Report GL 2017](#)

System of Public Libraries

The main focus of this contribution is on public libraries because they are not only the most numerous in the country, over 2,800 in 2019³, but mostly because they are closest to the people.³ There are small community center libraries in almost all populated areas in the country, very often in villages with population of up to 100 people. As a matter of facts, in the small areas, the community center and its adjacent library are the only cultural and social place for people.

The Mission of the public libraries is:

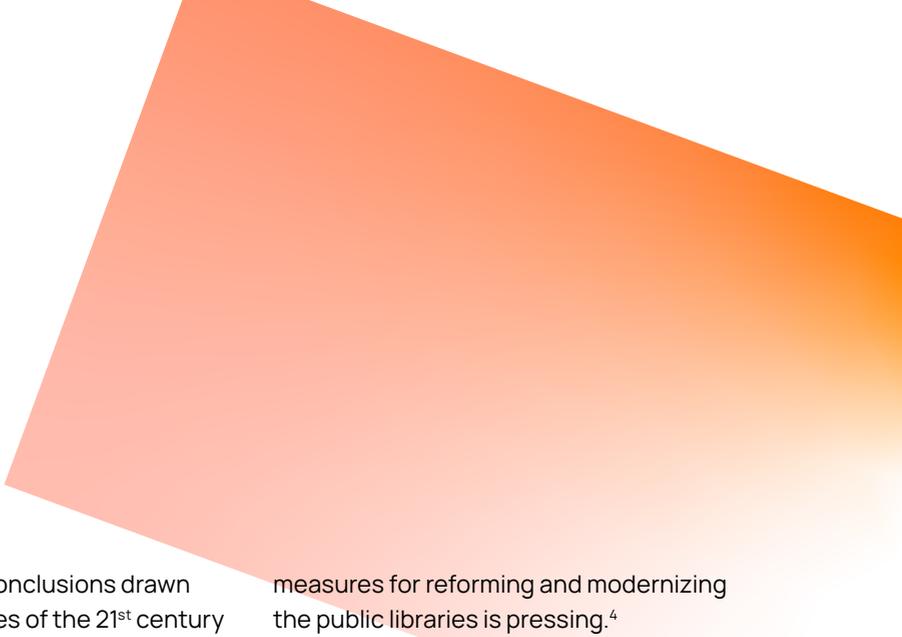
- To be a portal for access to information, services, and knowledge,
- To support education and lifelong learning,
- To develop digital skills,
- To increase information literacy,
- To promote literacy and reading,
- To enhance creativity and innovation,
- To support all sectors and all citizens.

The list of new services, activities, programs is extensive and depends on the needs of the community. Physical or virtual, there is no doubt that today libraries play an increasingly important role in the lives of local communities. Today, libraries support the development of all sectors and all citizens.

Libraries introduce new services and programs for citizens, provide computer and information literacy trainings, free use of digital collections on the internet, e-book borrowing.

The Global Libraries – Bulgaria Foundation (GLBF) is a non-profit organization, counting on its institutional partners when championing the cause of Bulgarian libraries on a national and local level, in accordance with the goals of campaigns and initiatives it is involved in. One of its main partners is the Bulgaria Library and Information Association. Over the last 5 years, the two organizations have worked towards changing the mechanisms for funding public libraries and transforming them into points of access to e-government services and high-speed internet.

In 2017, at the initiative of the Global Libraries – Bulgaria Foundation (GLBF), a study was conducted on the pioneering of a comprehensive approach with expert analyses added up to the sociological research⁴. A sociological survey was also pioneered among the municipal administrations and the competent opinion of experts in the field of financing and law was sought. The collected information was a very good basis for a multifaceted analysis of the issues in the public library development and allowed the construction of complex measures.



One of the main conclusions drawn was that the 'public libraries of the 21st century play a new role, i.e. the role of modern, creative, educational and social centers. The services they provide ensure access of all society members to educational, entertainment, cultural and information activities targeted to improve the quality of life. The development of public libraries required recognition of their efforts put into the development of education, culture, digitalization, access to information, strategies for social integration.'

The survey also showed several issues in the performance of libraries. The most important are: Libraries buy only 35% of the new books; 39% of the community center libraries do not subscribe to periodicals; Over 90% of the libraries do not have a website; 46% of the libraries have never been refurbished since opening; often long ago; 18% of the libraries buildings with maintenance issues have never been repaired.

These alarming findings of this study are related to the possibilities to providing and creating access to information. On the other hand, it shows that the physical environment increasingly fails to meet the requirements for a modern functioning of public libraries. Some successful good practices are seen in the regional and a small part of the community center libraries, but the need for specific

measures for reforming and modernizing the public libraries is pressing.⁴

Other alarming findings are related to the level of automation of library processes and digitization of materials. They become even more worrying in the context of the Covid-19 crisis and the new conditions in which libraries will have to operate. Only 13% of them keep electronic catalogs. The electronic catalogs of only 5% of them (mostly regional, municipal, and large community centers) are available online through the global network. The introduction of new technology (automation, digitalization of documents) in the main library processes is limited and covers only the regional, municipal, and larger community center libraries. Only 2% of all libraries in the country have access to paid databases. This is proof that public libraries have limited access to qualified sources and provide information mainly based on their physical library collections.

Public libraries in Bulgaria are increasingly focusing on participation in national and international projects to compensate for systemic underfunding to face the current challenges and to be able to perform their functions in the service of citizens. More and more regional and municipal libraries participate, independently or in partnership with other libraries and organizations, under the following programs:



Staff training.



Reading Program.

(1) National level: EEA Grants; Ministry of Culture; Erasmus+; (2) International level: European Commission; Interreg Danube Transnational Programme; Erasmus+.

Global Libraries – Bulgaria Foundation works in two directions to increase the capacity of library professionals: (1) Developing training program; (2) Small grant scheme. In the period 2015-2017, under a contract with the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture, GLBF continued the training activities adding new modules on access to e-government in the library, visual literacy, Wikipedia, media literacy, presentation and communication skills, project development, ICT. GLBF organized 190 training courses, involving 2,525 participants.

The guiding principle regarding our internal funding programs is to decide on the overall priorities and, based on that, to establish procedures that would allow the highest number of libraries to apply for and benefit of funding. The grant scheme sought to reaffirm the role of libraries as active participants in public life through cooperation with local, regional, and national non-governmental organizations. The goal of the grant scheme is to demonstrate the potential of libraries as centers for social inclusion, as a place for meetings and discussions, but also as an active participant in the debates on problems of local and regional character. Within the framework of the program, GLBF supports successful models of cooperation, as well as the establishment of new partnerships within the civil sector.



Workshop Bee-Bots during Code Week.

In the period 2015-2018, GLBF funded 106 projects, involving 127 libraries in partnership with 89 schools and NGOs. A large part of the projects was focused on educational integration of children from minority groups; others covered environmental issues and education. Within the framework of the program, GLBF supported models of cooperation, as well as the establishment of new partnerships with the civil sector. Those partnerships reaffirmed the potential of libraries as resource centers and publicly engaged institutions, as places for meetings and discussions, but also as active participants in debates and solutions to problems of local and regional importance.

National Campaign and Initiatives

Since 2006, the Bulgarian Library and Information Association has been organizing its 'National Library Week'. GLBF has been its partner for the last 5 years. The National Library Week was aimed at focusing the attention of the authorities and the public on the problems of libraries and the key role they are playing in the information society. Capturing the alarming trends of withdrawal from reading in the late 1990s, libraries were among the first to implement programs to promote reading and literacy among children and students. The 'National Reading Marathon' is a campaign



Children participating in Code Week activities.

to promote reading that has been running since 2015. It traditionally starts on April 2, the International Children's Book Day, and ends on April 23, the World Book and Copyright Day. Readings are organized in regional, university and school libraries, bookstores, schools, galleries, cultural centers, museums, training centers, clubs, media, in nurseries and kindergartens, retirement homes, buses, cafés and parks. Intellectuals and public figures, representatives of local authorities, students, authors, and artists personally defend and stand up for the importance of reading and perform excerpts from famous books for children. The event is accompanied by essay competitions, drawing competitions, exhibitions and films dedicated to the book. In 2020 with Covid-19, the 15th edition of the Marathon took place online in a digital environment because, as Mason Cooley an American aphorist) (puts it, 'Reading gives us someplace to go when we have to stay where we are.'

In 2016 GLBF organized the first National Forum for Public Libraries in the network. The Forum was very successful and GLBF decided to develop this initiative as an annual national event held in November. The Forum highlights the work of the Bulgarian public libraries, the innovative services they provide and the challenges they face. The Forum brings together representatives of

public libraries in Bulgaria as well as members of the central and local governments and representatives of socially responsible businesses, non-government organizations, and academia. Depending on the focus of the annual forum, GLBF invites colleagues from other countries and project patrons to share their experience.

Bulgarian public libraries since 2016 have organized different trainings during the Europe Code Week reaching out to thousands of children in fun coding workshops, and further developed the skills of young people in computational skills and computational thinking training courses. In October 2018, for the third consecutive year, the Bulgarian libraries became active participants in the Europe Code Week organizing several free fun coding workshops and demonstrations. Using the Finch robots from a U.S. Embassy donation, they scheduled and conducted such programs in over 50 towns and villages reaching out to over 4,500 young people. Those programs were highly appreciated by school management and parents alike, as in many cases the young people in those places had first-time hands-on experience with robots and programming.

'All Digital Week' is following in the footsteps of the European Get Online Week that ran between 2010 and 2017, as one of the major pan-European awareness raising



Global Libraries Bulgaria Conference 2019.

campaigns on digital skills for inclusion and employment. GLBF joined All Digital Week for the first time in 2016 with a variety of initiatives in regional libraries. The Global Libraries – Bulgaria Foundation and Bulgaria Library and Information Association have worked towards changing the mechanisms for funding public libraries and transforming them into points of access to e-government services and high-speed internet over the last 5 years.

What Needs to be Changed?

The library sector needs a new and consistent national policy embodied in a development strategy. The public library development strategy must ensure a reform

within the network of public libraries, which will provide equal access to library services for all social categories. If the Standard for Library and Information Services is used in determining the funding of public libraries, this will ensure the creation of conditions favorable to the provision of first-class library services. A mechanism needs to be developed for targeted funding of priority activities at national level for digitalization and preservation of cultural heritage, for automation of technological processes, for renewal and improvement of equipment, facilities, etc. The network of public libraries should become a place for access to e-government with expert and consulting assistance for citizens when using e-government services.

Today, public libraries in Bulgaria operate in an extremely different information environment compared to 10 years ago. If we have to make a brief description of this environment the key words would be: increasing role of the global network and the strong spread of social networks, the citizen is not only a user, but also a generator of electronic information. As digitization becomes more widespread, the volume of digitally generated documents is growing. The new young generation is born-digital; they lack the skills to handle paper texts. They find it difficult to transform information into knowledge, which is why the percentage of functionally



Experiencing Virtual reality.



illiterate young people is growing. At the same time, there is a growing need for information to support education and training arising from the democratization of education and the legitimization of non-formal and informal self-learning, as well as lifelong learning.

Where Is Our Future? In the processes of digitalization, in the exchange of digital information, in creating open digital archives, in the access to e-government, and in the places for social communications and culture.

Impact of Global Libraries – Bulgaria Program

The Global Libraries - Bulgaria Program is a joint initiative of the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture, the United Nations Development Program, the Bulgarian Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications, the National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria, and the Bulgarian Library and Information Association. Global Libraries – Bulgaria is designed to facilitate access to information, knowledge, communication, e-contents, and community services through Bulgaria's public libraries network. Within five years (2009-2013), the Program increased library usage throughout the country and

helped Bulgarian citizens integrate into the global information society. With its 960 global libraries providing free-of-charge access to computers and the Internet, the Program covers 98.5% of the territory of the country or a total of 911 towns and villages in 260 municipalities. 13,492 units of equipment (computers, laptops, printers, network and multimedia equipment), of which 4,935 are computers, were installed in the libraries supported by the Program. Microsoft donated Windows 7 Enterprise, MS Office Professional, MS Visio and MS Project which were installed at all work stations. The Internet access in libraries is provided by the municipalities and the chitalishte. The Program also includes a training component, within which 3,740 librarians were trained to provide contemporary library services via technology.

In 2013, Bulgarian ministries, local authorities, and non-government organizations joined their efforts, working for sustainability and further development of the public library network, and Global Library – Bulgaria Foundation (GLBF) was established as a legal successor of the Glob@l Libraries – Bulgaria Program. Today, the Foundation continues to cooperate with the 960 public libraries from the Program for providing free Internet, access to information and e-services. In the last 2 years, the number of libraries sharing the mission and the goals of the Foundation grew up to 1008.



Workshop 3D printing.

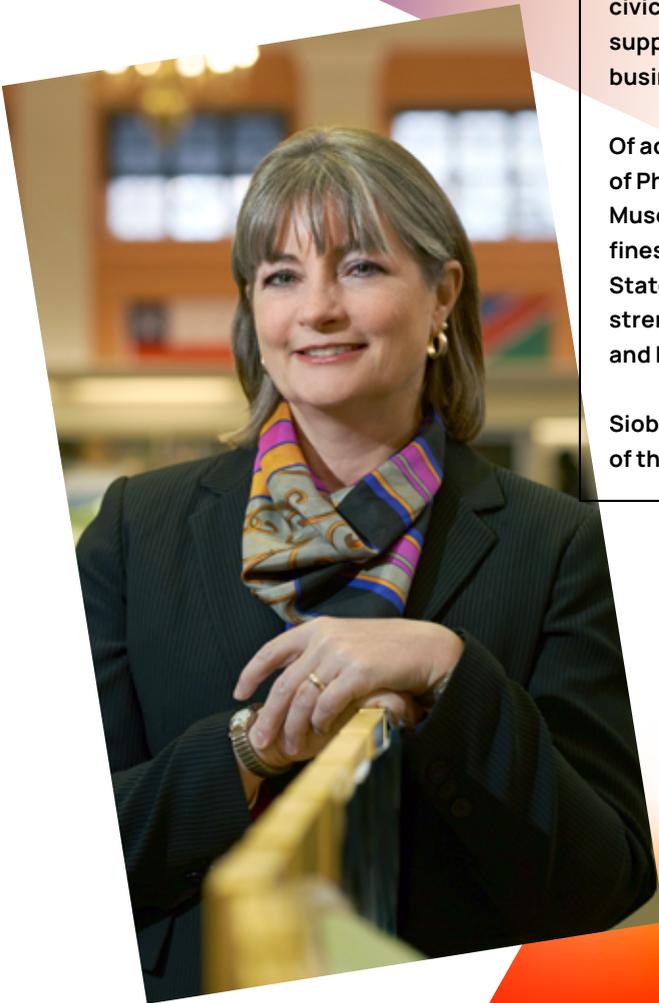
To promote libraries as centers for equal access to information, knowledge, lifelong learning, culture and electronic services for all citizens, the Foundation launched the campaign *The Road to the Library*. The initiative covers all regional, municipal libraries and chitalishte libraries from the network of GLBF and is organized in partnership with local authorities. During the campaign bilingual signs “Библиотека/Library” have become part of the local road signs infrastructure in settlements throughout the country, pointing the direction to the library. In the period 2016-2017 2,299 signs were placed in 924 settlements.

About the author

Siobhan O. Reardon recently retired as the President & Director of the Free Library of Philadelphia. She was the first woman to serve in that role in the library's history. During her tenure at the Free Library Siobhan redirected the work of the staff to understand that their work is about the people they serve and less about the 'stuff' – the books, technology, and building which are the tools to learning. Her vision led to the creation of several new 'centers' which helped focus the work of staff in the areas of literacy development, health, civic discourse and cultural enrichment and support for the entrepreneurial and small business communities.

Of additional note, in 2014 the Free Library of Philadelphia merged with the Rosenbach Museum and Library combining two of the finest rare book collections in the United States into one world-class collection with strengths in Americana, British, American and Modernist literature.

Siobhan was named Library Journal's Librarian of the Year in 2015.



Health Literacy by Siobhan O. Reardon (USA)

During my tenure at the Free Library of Philadelphia (FLP), we embarked upon several exciting initiatives designed to catapult the institution as a leader in library service and programmatic initiatives. From a design perspective, we know that unless you change the space in which we work, work itself – from a traditional library sense – does not change. We also know that we need money to achieve all the work we want to accomplish. Thus, we developed a fundraising campaign entitled *Building Inspiration: 21st Century Libraries*.

The campaign was a groundbreaking initiative to renovate and expand the Parkway Central Library, restore, and modernize neighborhood libraries across the city, and strengthen community partnerships to best meet the diverse needs of all Philadelphians. We raised more than \$80 million in order to achieve desired goals. Not only did we renovate many Carnegie libraries into 21st Century learning centers, but we also established several 'centers' designed to focus the library's work specifically around health, civic engagement, literacy, and small business development.

The South Philadelphia Health and Literacy Center was a collaboration among the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, the city's department of Parks and Recreation, the city's health department and the Free Library of

Philadelphia. The goal was to integrate these resources to bring about access to information and ideas to build a healthier South Philadelphia neighborhood. The Center for Enrichment and Civic Engagement promotes civic dialog and bring about cultural enrichment for library constituents, and the Business Resource and Innovation Center promotes business success and networking for small businesses and entrepreneurs. And, the Culinary Literacy Center promotes literacy through recipes, communal learning and promoting a life-affirming lifestyle. We are proud of these accomplishments.

Philadelphia, a City of Promise

Before going any further, a little about the City of Philadelphia. Philadelphia is the 6th largest city in the United States by population size with over 1.584 million residents. It is an old city and was designated as the first capital of the country in 1776 and, therefore, it is a historically significant city. Philadelphia is a politically interesting city which has liberal/progressive leanings. It is a majority minority city with 60% of the residents identifying as black or brown. Philadelphia is a city of promise.

The population keeps growing. There are so many people whose aspiration it is to start, improve or enhance the entrepreneurial



and small business sector of the city and see it as the economic way forward for a city with an unemployment rate of over 17%. It is a city of many neighborhood churches. However, Philadelphia is also the poorest large city in the United States with confounding issues, such as persistent poverty at 25% of the population, and 50%+ of adults over the age of 18 are functionally illiterate. Only 28% of Philadelphians complete 4 years of college.

The Free Library of Philadelphia is the 13th largest library system in the US as defined by the service area population. It is a large system with over 1000 full and part-time/hourly employees serving constituents throughout a network of 58 locations including Hot Spots (small community-based technology hubs), a Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped as well as the Rosenbach Museum and Library.

As noted above, Philadelphia has more than 550,000 adults over the age of 18 who are low literate. Specifically, these individuals do not have a reading level above the 4th grade and thus struggle to fill out a job application which leads to their inability to obtain employment that provides family-sustaining wages. These Philadelphians also have trouble reading prescription labels as well as restaurant menus.

So, what was the Free Library to do about any of this? Or, what was a library going to do to become a solutions-based organization that brings about positive results by reversing trends? We all know that literacy and jobs are two of the keys to providing family sustaining employment as well as living in a household that is better able to support lifelong learning. Therefore, what are the sorts of innovative programming needed to be provided to Philadelphians with the information and supports necessary to address these issues?

A New Role for the Library

We all know, the role of the public library shifted radically over the past 15 years, expanding its primary role as a place for 'stuff' to one focused on people – our constituents, users, patrons. By providing dynamic programming, engaging the citizenry in cultural and civic conversations, as well as serving as a reference and access point for social services we were covering the access landscape for all constituents.

In 2012 the Pew Philadelphia Research Initiative examined the role the Free Library of Philadelphia played in the community, releasing *The Library in the City: Demands and a Challenging Future*. The study examined

the myriad of ways the public both uses and does not use the library and recommended changes necessary to meet demands considering economic challenges and advancing technologies. Key among the study's findings was that 34% of library users sought or obtained health information. The Pew report results illuminated the Free Library's potential role in educating the public about critical health concerns and acting as a conduit for positive impacts on the community's health.

Thus, key to the Free Library's physical upgrades, noted above, was the importance of rethinking and establishing new programs that would get at some of the important social issues challenging Philadelphia, namely poverty, obesity, illiteracy, and homelessness. Given the above, the Free Library introduced an innovative new program called the Culinary Literacy Center or CLC. Guided by aspects of social determinants of health, the staff of the CLC were able to establish many facets of the overall program. As an aside, the US Center for Disease Control defines social determinants of health as access to 'life enhancing resources such as food supply, housing, economic and social relationships, transportation, education and health care whose effective distributions across populations effect length and quality of life.'



Kitchen of the Culinary Literacy Center in the Free Library of Philadelphia.

Culinary Literacy Center (CLC)

In its essence, the Culinary Literacy Center (CLC) offers programs to literally everyone – from pre-school students to senior citizens and everyone in-between. There are even classes specifically designed to involve those who have visual and developmental disabilities, veterans and those who are food insecure. All learn how to cook – using fresh food – on a minimal budget. Some of these programs will be discussed in a bit more detail further on.

The Culinary Literacy Center (CLC) is the first kitchen-classroom in a public library in the United States. It opened in 2014 as part of a substantial capital improvement project of the library's Parkway Central Library.



Knife skills – Free Library of Philadelphia.

The Center’s mission is ‘to advance literacy through food and cooking around a communal table’ by teaching basic literacies like reading, math, and science and non-traditional ones like nutrition, English-language learning, and cooking.

The Social Determinants of Health-theory (mentioned above) plays a large role in the fabric of this unique service by creating and curating programs with a keen eye toward diversity, equity, and inclusion. Again, programs have included those for school-aged children, teens, adults with disabilities, English-language learners, the visually impaired, and veterans, each based on demand. Also, the CLC provides employment opportunities for Project Home residents. Project Home is an organization whose mission it is to ‘empower individuals to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness



Edible Alphabet – Free Library of Philadelphia.

through affordable housing, employment, health care and education.’

Response to the Culinary Literacy Center was immediate, with dozens of food and nutrition experts, businesses, and public service programs seeking collaboration. In a similar approach to the other health literacy efforts, FLP staff studied community need, looking at health statistics and disparities in the city to determine the menu of programs. Paired with this, they scanned the landscape of nonprofit and community organizations to understand best the array of existing offerings, places with service gaps where the CLC could step in, and the partners with which to accomplish the latter.



Not surprisingly, community partners are integral to the delivery of the Culinary Literacy Center services. Food educators, chefs, healthcare experts from local hospitals, nutrition staff from local universities, and start-up entrepreneurs were among the array of service providers that have taught and currently teach CLC classes. Importantly, FLP staff always understood that their role in providing these services to the community was not to become chefs themselves but to identify community needs, design service delivery methods, provide information and literary resources and ask the experts for support in making it all possible. Since the CLC opened, nearly 50,000 people have participated in any number of programs offered by the Center.

Cooking Classes in the Neighborhood Libraries (without a kitchen)

While it was clear that nutrition and cooking classes were a draw at Parkway Central, CLC staff quickly saw the need to expand beyond the doors of the kitchen-classroom to make programming available

to as many of the Free Library's 54 locations as possible. While offering cooking classes without a kitchen poses some challenges, staff devised several methods of service delivery that made it possible to replicate courses in any situation. Initially, our staff invented the 'Kitchen in a Box', literally a plastic storage bin, filled with cooking equipment. Staff frequently explain that all a space needs to host a cooking class and create any dish are a table, electrical outlet, running water and the most basic of cooking tools.

Larger versions of the 'Kitchen in a Box' include such tools as an electric skillet, immersion blender, chef's knives, measuring cups and spoons, mixing bowls, cutting boards, and several other essential tools. The cost for the full-blown version of the Box costs approximately \$800, but the smaller – most basic – version can cost as little as \$150. A step up from the Box is a mobile kitchen apparatus known as the 'Culinary Literacy Cart'. The Cart comes equipped with a small convection oven, induction burner, blender, griddle and even a small sink. It also includes a nutrition-education curriculum for children, making it perfect for after-school programming, pop-up demonstrations at festivals and the like, as well as hands-on lessons for all audiences. The CLC Cart, however, is a bit pricier at \$10,000 – which makes it a less feasible option for most of our neighborhood libraries.



Edible Alphabet – Free Library of Philadelphia.

While a range of program options in multiple locations supports community demand, CLC staff also recognized the need to engage local organizations as players in helping address the significant food insecurity and inequities in Philadelphia and throughout the local region. Unfortunately, Philadelphia has 22% of its population living in high poverty areas, with no walkable access to healthy food. In three of the most impoverished neighborhoods of the city that statistic jumped to 35%.

In response, the staff of the CLC started the *Good Food for All* conference in 2015 in partnership with the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger. The conference continues to engage advocates for food access. Food educators, hunger fighters, advocates for food access, those who are eligible for SNAP (the US government food subsidy program) and others are among those who attend the conference. All participants learn about eating well on a budget, reducing food waste, self-care, food workers' rights and any number of topics related to food justice.

The Library as a Trusted Community Resource

Back at the Culinary Literacy Center's kitchen-classroom, staff have also worked with the Philadelphia Autism Project to produce classes that provide basic cooking skills for teens and adults with developmental disabilities. These classes are significant because this population suffers disproportionately from higher rates of obesity, gastrointestinal issues and eating disorders. These classes focus on following a recipe and how to stay safe in the kitchen. Students typically prepare a fresh, healthy meal, cook and eat it, and go home with bags of fresh ingredients to replicate their new skills. This program is now in its 4th year at the CLC.

Positioning the library in its most optimal role as a trusted community resource



can bring together a vast network of partners and collaborators. And, since programs on healthy eating and exercise compel adult populations, the need for social service supports in connection with the Culinary Literacy Center are imperative. The CLC has deep connections with the library's social workers, the city's health department as well as department of behavioral health. They are prepared to bring in supports necessary for an individual in crisis.

In addition to the more targeted programs noted, the CLC offers an incredible array of ticketed programs for those who wish to learn to create the perfect cheese board using local ingredients for instance; local chefs are a significant contributors to the roster of classes bringing an array of culinary and cultural practices for those interested. Those classes can be found on the CLC's website.

Other more formalized programs provided by the Culinary Literacy Center specifically designed to improve literacy and social skill sets are below, namely:

Edible Alphabet: Edible Alphabet is a free English-language learning (ELL) program. The goal is to teach English-language skills through hands-on cooking projects. In these classes' students learn vocabulary and grammar, as well as practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English while

cooking a delicious recipe every week. Classes are held weekly for 6 weeks several times a year. Since the inception of the program more than 600 students have participated immigrating from over 50 countries.

Nourishing Literacy: Nourishing Literacy is our school-visit program offering students and teachers food-based lessons in the Culinary Literacy Center and at their school that supports a classroom curriculum. Nourishing Literacy helps students make deeper connections between cooking, literacy, food and nutrition.

Cookability: Cookability is a program for visually impaired people to learn and share about food and cooking. The Culinary Literacy Center works with a chef instructor, who himself is legally blind, to offer hands-on cooking classes that incorporate adaptable and accessible approaches to buying and growing food and meal preparation for home cooks with limited vision.

Chow Down on Wellness: Chow Down on Wellness is a plant-based cooking class for military veterans designed to promote healthy eating habits and teambuilding in a relaxed social atmosphere. Health professionals have found that cooking in a social atmosphere can be therapeutic. The class explores the health benefits of cooking together.

An Investment in a Unique Initiative

Building the Culinary Literacy Center cost over \$1.2 Million. Funds for the construction of the Center came from a public-private partnership between the City of Philadelphia combined with a robust capital campaign, mentioned at the top of this piece, by the Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation. The Foundation continues, to this day, to raise private support for the Center's programming initiatives through private grants, sponsorships, private donations, ticket sales and program fees.

In closing, the unique approach and instant popularity of the Culinary Literacy Center have been useful in sustaining the initiative. The most apparent boon to growth is the community's love of food – around a communal table. The literacy, health and economic benefits of cooking, whether for oneself or others, and learning the skills to execute nutritious recipes support a passion that already exists for so many. We know that one of the most important things about a kitchen is that it is at the heart of everyone's homes – whether rich or poor.

More subliminal learning occurs in a kitchen than any other place in a person's life. Whether this program is the elixir which will begin to chip away at some of the poverty data presented at the beginning of this segment – is yet to be proven. However, food and cooking present many opportunities to advance literacy in one's life. By being able to read a recipe, understand the vocabulary of the ingredients and necessary cooking tools, practice the math of measurements and learning how to scale a recipe up or down are critical components to culinary literacy.

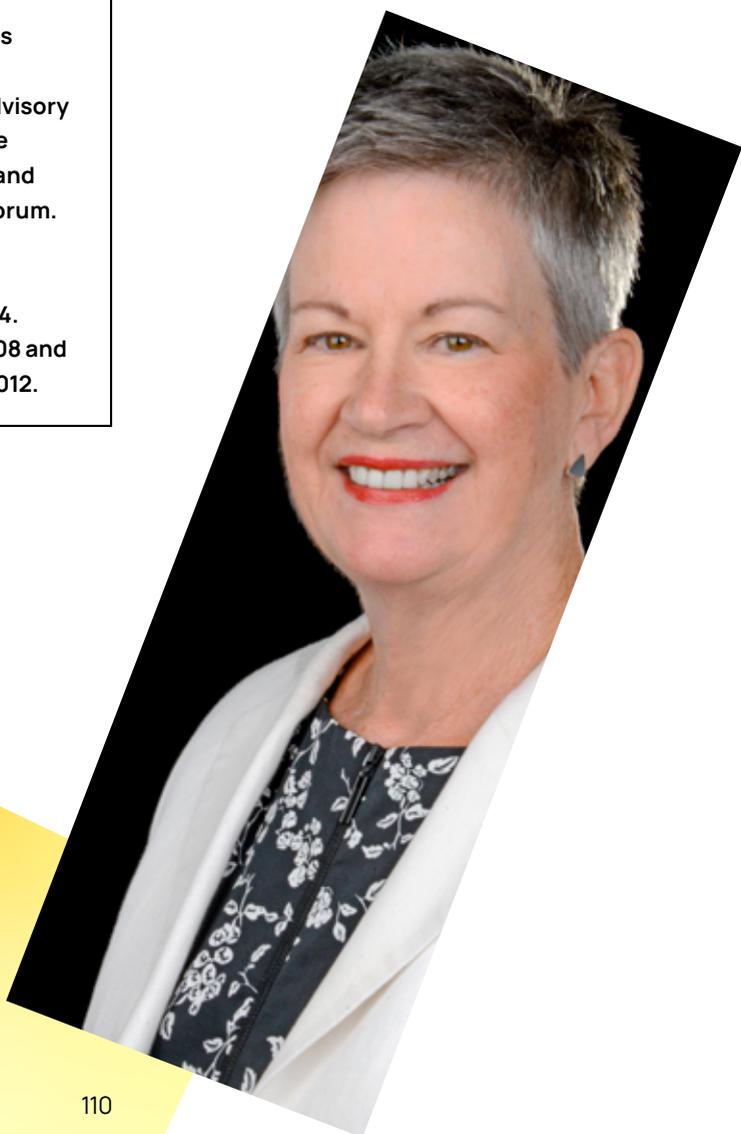
Add in the ability to study the science of cooking and growing your food, acknowledge the connection between your health and the food you eat and explore culture and history through cuisine, one can comprehend the initiative's completeness. Ultimately and hopefully, these new skills will lead those who are seeking family-sustaining employment to obtain successful employment, while other participants who are engaged in the socialization and skill building classes can find enjoyment and friends. However you look at it, these are hallmarks of a well-designed program. Come visit us either virtually or physically some day.



About the author

Christine Mackenzie is President of IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions). She retired as CEO of Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service in Melbourne, Australia, in 2016. Previously she was Manager of Brisbane City Council Library Service, the largest public library system in Australia. Christine was a co-founder of INELI-Oceania, a program funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that provided leadership training for librarians in Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific.

She has been a member of the Australian Government's Public Lending Rights Committee, the Library Board of Victoria's Advisory Committee on Public Libraries, the Victorian Government's Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries, the Executive of the Public Libraries Victoria Network, and a juror for the Intelligent Communities Forum. She has held a number of roles in ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association) including President 2003-04. She was awarded an ALIA fellowship in 2008 and the VALA Robert D Williamson Award in 2012.



Libraries in the Best of Times and the Worst of Times

by Christine Mackenzie (Australia)

We thought we understood the world, last year. Scenario planning, trends, strategic foresight, visioning workshops, librarians around the world debated, discussed, planned our futures. Who knew a virus, the size of a dust particle, could disrupt our dreams, visions, reality? Where do we go from here? The environment that libraries are operating in has changed so fundamentally in a few short months because of the global pandemic and our energies are spent coping with the present and its uncertainty.

Let's start with the environment we are in. Virginia Trioli, a social commentator and broadcaster in Melbourne, recently wrote that something about the social contract between authority and how we see ourselves as a community has broken down, like fabric degrading.¹ More and more people aren't doing the right thing by others, they no longer trust authority. There is weariness, anger and fear for ourselves and our way of life.

The rise and rise of Google, Amazon, Apple, and Facebook have led to antitrust hearings in the US Congress during July 2020, and questions over whether they have abused their power and dominance in the online marketplace. Use of data, behaviours towards competitors and perceptions of bias are the main issues raised. As these companies keep

getting richer and more powerful, traditional newspapers, shopping malls and department stores struggle to survive.

The world I grew up in, assumed the world would become fairer, more equitable, safer. In an article in *The Conversation*, Ian McKay, Director of the Wilson Institute for Canadian History, McMaster University, suggests we may be seeing the death of liberal democracy. Political theorist Francis Fukuyama in 1992 to the questions 'Who should rule and why?' gave the answer 'liberal democracy'. But this is not wearing well. 'Countless people experience the precariousness wrought by this extreme makeover of the world's liberal order. A neoliberal world, by design, offers minimal security – in employment, social stability, even in reliable networks of knowledge helping us reach reasoned understanding about the world in the company of our fellow citizens.'²

Just because Covid-19 has taken all the attention, it does not mean that climate change has gone away. The Black Summer bushfires in Australia at the beginning of the year killed 1 billion animals, 34 humans directly and 417 indirectly and burned over 18 million hectares and foreshadow the increasing threat of extreme weather. Climate change affects the natural world and our built environment and cultural heritage.

1 **Trioli, V.** (2020, August 1). Coronavirus has exposed the fragility of our social fabric, and the threads are falling apart. Retrieved from ABC News: abc.net.au

2 **McKay, I.** (2019, May 16). Are we witnessing the death of liberal democracy? Retrieved from The Conversation: theconversation.com

Governments of all persuasions around the world are grappling with the economic consequences of the pandemic. Whatever the state of economies before, their troubles are now greatly magnified. It will take years to recover from the fallout of widespread unemployment and the collapse of industries such as tourism and hospitality. Stimulus spending can't last forever, and already in the United Kingdom for example, local government is facing a funding gap of £7.4 bn.

Technological advances continue apace. Algorithms determine what we read, what advertisements we see, how we view the world. Artificial intelligence and big data track where we are, what we are doing, what we are looking at. We willingly surrender our privacy, our identities, our reactions and emotions to giant social media companies, for the opportunity to connect with others. When my husband searches for outdoor patios, advertisements helpfully appear on my Facebook feed. We continue the transition from analogue to digital. We become accustomed to meeting virtually, for business and socially. We start to plan virtual conferences, we get used to working and schooling from home, enabled (hopefully) by fast internet and affordable technology.

We adapt, we manage, we are humans, it is what we've been doing all along. There have been plagues before, and world wars, financial

crises, natural disasters, agricultural and industrial revolutions. We will get through this and libraries will have an important role to play. It feels like the world is waiting – there is much talk about the new normal and the old normal – do we really want to go back to what we had; is there a better way of living, a fairer and more sustainable model that might emerge? Or do we keep reacting, locking down against the power of a dumb virus?

In identifying the following ten library trends, there is much to be hopeful and optimistic about. Libraries are going to come out of 2020 – a year with more social changes than most of us have encountered in our lifetimes – stronger and more valued than ever.

1. Libraries Working on the Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become a core part of IFLA's work, in terms of our engagement both with external organisations, and with the library field. This is an ongoing effort, built on the energy, ideas and engagement of thousands of librarians around the world. (IFLA, 2019)

- 3 IFLA. (2019, May 31). IFLA President's Meeting 2019: New Perspectives, New Possibilities and a Call to Action for Libraries as Motors of Change. Retrieved from IFLA: ifla.org



The logo features the United Nations emblem on the left, followed by the text "SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS" in a bold, sans-serif font. The word "GOALS" is significantly larger and has a colorful, multi-segmented circular graphic behind the letter "O".



Sustainable Development Goals.

Libraries around the world are championing the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); there is no development without access to information and there is no meaningful access to information without libraries. IFLA and TASCHA (Technology and Social Change Unit, University of Washington) publish a Development and Access to Information (DA2i) report biannually, which highlights the role of libraries in achieving the UN2030 Agenda. The latest report was launched at the IFLA President's meeting in Buenos Aires in May 2019 and there were powerful and urgent calls to action from a number of the contributors as well as other speakers.³

There is urgency about climate change. Libraries have a role to play in providing access to information to ensure that people can make good decisions. Climate change affects everything including our cultural and documentary

heritage. At IFLA we are amplifying our efforts by becoming foundation members of the climate heritage network which was launched last year. The Climate Heritage Network is a voluntary, mutual support network of arts, culture and heritage organisations committed to aiding their communities in tackling climate change and achieving the ambitions of the Paris Agreement. The climate action network highlights that cultural heritage is a climate action issue; and climate action is a cultural heritage issue.

IFLA's Library Map of the World provides great examples of what individual libraries are doing to help achieve the SDGs. Lviv is a city of 756,000 people in western Ukraine. About 10 million tons of garbage are shipped to Ukrainian landfills annually and while 30-40% of this garbage is recyclable, only 4% of it is actually recycled. In 2016, a tragedy occurred in Lviv, when an uncontrolled fire caused the death of

- 4 **IFLA.** (2020, February 26). LIBRARY'S GARBAGE HERO EDUCATES CHILDREN IN ECO-THINKING AND RECYCLING. Retrieved from IFLA: librarymap.ifla.org
- 5 **Unwin, T.** (2019, February 28). Can digital technologies really be used to reduce inequalities? Retrieved from OECD Development Matters: oecd-development-matters.org
- 6 **Development and Access to Information:** Chapter 5. Retrieved from IFLA: [PDF](#)
- 7 **Horrigan, J.B.** (2016, September 20). Digital Readiness Gaps. Retrieved from Pew Research Insititute: pewresearch.org

six people. This accident directed the attention of the city's entire community towards the area's environmental problems. The Lviv Regional Children's Library wanted to help tackle the region's environmental issues, so its librarians launched the Garbage Hero educational project. Since the project's launch, the library has held over 150 *Garbage Hero* events and more than 3,000 people have participated. According to research conducted among 90 participants in the project, 70% responded that their families' recycling habits had changed drastically as a result of the Garbage Hero project. Children and their parents sort their trash not only in the library, but also at home. The use of eco-bags has also been widely adopted and the demand for eco-books has increased.⁴

2. Libraries Bridging the Digital Divide

*'The presence of a library, either real or virtual, does not necessarily mean that it will benefit the marginalised and reduce inequalities. At the very simplest level, if people do not know how to access a library, they cannot benefit from its content; if they cannot read the text, they are unable to learn from it; if there is nothing relevant to their needs, they will not be empowered.'*⁵

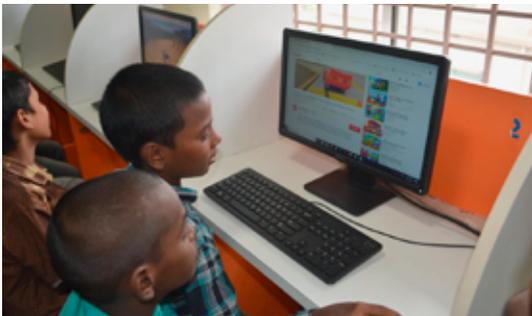
There are growing inequalities in the ability to access online information. Tim Unwin, Emeritus Professor, Royal Holloway, University of London and UNESCO Chair in ICT for Development says that technology is increasing inequality. While digital technologies offer vastly increased free (to end user) knowledge sharing, 44% of the world does not have access to the internet and without universal access inequality will increase. Guilherme Canela, UNESCO Communication and Information Adviser for Mercosur, describes the 'brutal inequalities in access to information' highlights the attack on science and evidence-based information and sets out the need to work with citizens to ensure that they seized their right to information, and use it.⁶ The Pew Research Centre released a report on Digital Readiness in relation to online learning and American adults. The report says how there has been a big emphasis previously on access to technology, but this report assesses the ability of adults to use online learning tools. And the results are disturbing. The research shows that only 17% are digitally ready to undertake online learning.⁷

Public libraries have long recognised the need to provide support and facilities for those in danger of being left behind. The Victorian Tech Savvy Seniors program is a good example of this, it is a coordinated state-wide project and classes are offered in ten community languages as well as English to people who hold a Seniors Card.

- 8 **Florida, R.** (2018, September 12). How 'Social Infrastructure' Can Knit America Together. Retrieved from Bloomberg CityLab: [bloomberg.com](https://www.bloomberg.com)

Lifelong learning opportunities come in all sorts of ways, and online learning will only continue to grow. Many libraries offer access to resources such as Lynda.com where you can learn almost anything online at your own pace at no cost. The Quezon City Public Library, Philippines, provides a wide array of services including digital access to legal ordinances, as well as computer and internet services that support the local government and the information needs of its citizens. College student volunteers join librarians in their outreach activities to local youth and remote libraries.

commercial ones. For instance, the public library: It provides a variety of services and public benefits for people of all ages and stations, regardless of social class, regardless of race or ethnicity, regardless of citizenship status. They're amazing institutions that would be kind of inconceivable if we didn't already have them. It's hard to imagine this notion that every citizen has a right to their cultural heritage and to access a free place where they can better themselves outside of the market coming from a moment like this.'
Eric Klinenberg.⁸



Libraries bridging the digital divide, Chennai India. Photo: provided by Priyanka Mohan.

3. Libraries as Social Glue

'But social infrastructure is more expansive. It involves a number of public facilities as well as these private and

The world has felt more fragile and fractured since the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the subsequent righteous anger. In response IFLA published a statement condemning all forms of racism as fundamentally contrary to human rights and the values of our profession, and which says that 'Libraries are institutions with a mission to improve the lives of the individuals and communities they serve. They do this not just through rejecting discrimination, but through actively promoting inclusion, giving everyone a meaningful opportunity to realise their rights to information, culture, information and science.' No matter how big or small, rich or poor, libraries around the world are the hearts of their communities and provide connection. Libraries are one of the few safe spaces where all are welcomed and where we share wonderful

communal collections of resources. Libraries continue to evolve and engage people.

The Angelique Foundation in India is working with schools to set up children's libraries. In the past, school libraries locked up their books in cupboards because if they were damaged staff had to pay. The Foundation has transformed libraries into happy places that are functional, colourful and with books at the right literacy level. The school gives the space, and the Foundation comes in and furnishes them. There are now 268 libraries all working well, with shared ownership; everyone has a stake in the success of these libraries. For those schools with a children's library, it is mandatory to include a library period in the curriculum.

4. Libraries as Creative Spaces, Learning Spaces, Co working Spaces

'In a bid to address the changing needs of the citizenry, libraries are establishing co-working spaces through digitization and creative use of their spaces. Many public libraries devote a great deal of space to library

materials that are no longer useful. These spaces see limited foot traffic, and the reading material remains on the shelves gathering dust. In response to this, librarians are taking the bold, controversial step of moving bookshelves aside to create more communal spaces' (TechSoup, 2018).⁹

The former director of Helsinki City Library, Maija Berndtson, is a visionary, the first person I heard talking about libraries as third places, picking up on the work of Ray Oldenburg. The home is the first place, the workplace the second and the third place is the social surroundings separate from these. Examples of third places are environments such as churches, cafes, clubs, public libraries, bookstores or parks. In his influential book *The Great Good Place*, Ray Oldenburg argues that third places are important for civil society, democracy, civic engagement, and establishing feelings of a sense of place.¹⁰ This idea of libraries as the third place took hold and indeed for nearly 20 years has been one of the main motivations for library design around the world. Creating friendly, inclusive, welcoming spaces where people can sit and 'be alone with others' as Inga Lunden, former City Librarian of Stockholm says. There are some libraries that make you feel so comfortable, you could happily spend hours in them. Neude Library is one such library; already people are settling in and owning the building. These spaces feel like an extension of home.



Workshop building small electric cars out of recycled materials, LAB Utrecht Public Library. Photo: Anna van Kooij.

Nearly 10 years ago I visited a co working space in Amsterdam, which was the start of a movement that had also spread to Melbourne, Australia. These hubs were so different from the way people were accustomed to working, with their open spaces, kitchens, tables and chairs, no walls, encouraging people to connect with others and foster creativity. Similar spaces are now being incorporated into suburban public libraries as well as major institutions such as State Library Victoria, Australia which recently opened the Ideas Quarter that is home to StartSpace, a dedicated coworking space specifically for early-stage start-ups and small businesses, it seats 120 and provides inspiration, information and practical guidance for new businesses.

LocHal in Tilburg, The Netherlands, really breaks new ground with the 8 labs within the building. They are the DigiLab,

GameLab, FutureLab, Mobile FoodLab, LearningLab, TimeLab, DialogueLab, and WordLab. These are spaces to share, to learn, to think, to talk, to imagine. Each of the labs has a dedicated staff member to program the space, build partnerships and deliver programs. The FutureLab is running a program for primary aged children, where they are designing a space ship to travel to Mars. The purpose is for them to create a better world when they get there, and then looking back at Earth, return home bringing the best of this new way of being. The FoodLab offers a taste of insects to promote thinking about sustainable food production. The TimeLab is where local history comes to life; and where the local dialect is being preserved through the creation of a computer program that creates word pictures and uses a type font especially created for Tilburg. What was obvious was that these labs just didn't spring up for the new



LocHal Library Tilburg. Photo: Ossip Architectuurfotografie.

building. They have been planning, designing, prototyping these concepts in their old library, but now they are able to make them visible and more accessible.

5. Libraries as Tourist Attractions

'Last year two Danish librarians – Christian Lauersen and Marie Eriksson – founded a worldwide, crowdsourced, online library travel guide. According to them, Library Planet is meant to inspire travellers “to open the awesome book that is our world of libraries, cities and countries” The name of the online project is a deliberate nod to the Australian-made Lonely Planet. The concept is simple and powerful. Library lovers contribute library profiles and images from their travels; the founders then curate and publish the posts, with the ambition of capturing library experiences and library attractions from around the world.' (Kells, 2019) ¹¹

One of the first public libraries to be a tourist attraction in its own right was OBA

Library of Amsterdam. When it opened in 2007 it immediately attracted visitors who wanted to eat at the impressive food hall and view the city from the rooftop; one of the best places to do that and as well see a beautiful, functional architectural building. There are now public libraries around the world that are drawcards for their cities. There are the mega libraries; the first new national library for many years is the Qatar National Library opened in 2018. Designed by the architect Rem Koolhaas, one of the most striking features of the library is the celebration of the book, with the shelves being a prominent feature. The building is notable for its light and space, and it is very difficult to get a sense of the huge volume of the space just through photographs. The most outstanding part of the library is the Heritage Library, housed in a beautiful marble room that is in the centre of the library and the metaphorical heart of the library. The items are displayed with great effect and provide a fascinating view of Qatar's history.

Guangzhou Public Library, China is the biggest public library in the world at 100 thousand square metres with a collection of 8.43 million items. There are 4500 seats and it

11 **Kells, S.** (2019, May 31). Friday essay: the library – humanist ideal, social glue and now, tourism hotspot. Retrieved from The Conversation: theconversation.com

12 **Librarians and Social Activism.** (2016, September 18). Retrieved from Public Libraries Online: publiclibrariesonline.org

receives 40,000 visitors a day. It is situated on the Pearl River next to the Opera House and the Museum. It looks like a shopping mall and is obviously very popular with the community.

DOKK1 in Aarhus, Denmark is the library everyone wants to see and be part of in the city. Using co design principles, engaging many partners, providing flexible and appealing spaces where people can learn, read, or just be. An icon for the city, a tourist destination and a much-loved and appreciated community space, it too redefined what a library can be.

In November 2019 Forum Groningen opened. It is not called a library and it might well be a disruptor. This cultural centre in the city of Groningen in the northern Netherlands houses a library, cinema, and parts of the Groninger Museum. Here you find entertainment, infotainment, high end cafes and bars, large open spaces, fun areas like a reading net where you can lie above bookshelves, attend programs and play with technology. It is a vibrant bustling building, full of people and very popular with the community. But it raises questions of inclusion, equity and diversity; it is not the comfortable third place community space we have all worked so hard to create. It feels more like a commercial space, a shopping mall.

Another library that is sure to be a tourist attraction is Utrecht's recently opened

Bibliotheek Neude. The new library is in the renovated former Post Office building, an important part of the fabric of the city and its history. It is the new heart of the city centre, rejuvenating the area, and has been very well received by the community. It contains all that a very modern library should, including the Open Laboratory where people can get acquainted with new technology, different machines and robotics, where they can create, program and try out new things. The building has a warm mellow feel, thanks to the original brickwork and the very careful restoration and reuse of materials and infrastructure. It seems like it has always been there, it just feels right. It is a wonderful example of reusing an old building.

6. Librarians are Social Activists

'As we enter election season, I am reminded daily of issues of politics. As public servants, librarians must be apolitical in their work life in terms of candidates and parties. But at the same time, librarianship in many ways is a highly politicized occupation. In fact, regardless of location, the librarian can wield a great deal of social power and influence. Like it or not, intended or not, the librarian can bring about and effect social change.' (Librarians and Social Activism, 2016)¹²

- 13 **Convery, S.** (2020, August 13). When Covid closed the library: staff call every member of Victorian library to say hello. Retrieved from The Guardian: [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)
- 14 **Quillette.** (2020, March 2020). A Librarian's Timeless Mission: Supporting Social Justice Through Freedom of Speech. Retrieved from Quillette : [quillette.com](https://www.quillette.com)
- 15 **CILIP.** "Equalities and Diversity Action Plan." CILIP. 2020. [cilip.org.uk](https://www.cilip.org.uk)

Librarians really care about the communities they serve. Since the lockdowns the library world has been divided in its response, with some colleagues pushing that libraries are an essential service and so the buildings should remain open, while others believe that the health of library users and staff is more important than keeping the physical doors open. In most cases governments decided and libraries closed their buildings. Libraries have been quick to say that they are not closed; that they are still providing online and virtual books, programs and services, encouraging reading and learning and providing connections in the most innovative ways. An article in *The Guardian* tells how staff at one library in Melbourne, Australia called every library member over 70 to check in on them after the first lockdown. Other libraries have delivered books with Meals on Wheels, lent musical instruments, held online seminars and workshops and remote connection with a social worker.¹³

While these heart-warming stories spread good feelings and happiness, others have taken a harder route to defend people's rights. Vickery Bowles, the City Librarian at Toronto Public Library, has come up hard against the reality of protecting free speech in the library setting. In a published version of a speech she gave in March 2020 she provides the rationale for her decision to go ahead with a third-party room rental event at the library

organised by a group called Radical Feminists Unite. She says: 'For generations, public libraries have been a democratizing force in the world, supporting civil society and helping us learn about the world in all of its complexities. With so many challenges to freedom of speech, it's imperative that we continue to have open, uncensored discourse, and listen to, respect, and learn from each other's perspectives. We need to hear more voices, not fewer voices. And that's what public libraries allow us to do each and every day.'¹⁴

Since the George Floyd killing in the US, the impact of racism has been highlighted. In response, the board of CILIP, UK's library and information association, has approved five new proposals for a program to diversify its leadership and governance (CILIP, 2020).¹⁵ This includes creating an anti-racist policy, setting diversity targets and implement an annual equality, diversity and inclusion audit. CILIP recognises that there are systemic barriers that need to be overcome and these measures are a start to ensuring the organisation is diverse and inclusive.

- 16 **Hinton, P.N.** "Librarians and the power of social media." Book riot. 22 June 2020. [↗bookriot.com](https://bookriot.com)
- 17 **Hern, Alex.** "Facebook and other tech giants 'too big to fail'." The Guardian. 11 August 2020. [↗theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com)



7. Libraries and Librarians are being Shaped by Social Media

'One place that libraries have started to shine more brightly are on the various social media platforms. Most libraries have their own Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter, if not all three. They use these for any number of different things to help keep the love of the library alive. Whether it's asking what you're reading or advertising upcoming events, libraries and librarians are using social media to fully show all that a library can do to foster and maintain a sense of community.' (Hinton, 2020).¹⁶

A recent article in *The Guardian* suggests that 'Like banks in the 2008 financial crisis, Facebook and other tech giants are 'too big to fail' according to research from Oxford University that calls for new regulations to protect users, and society in the event of a possible collapse.'¹⁷ There is little doubt that libraries are heavily invested in their Facebook and Instagram accounts, and to a lesser extent, Twitter. Facebook is extremely popular with public libraries and we have libraries around the world reacting innovatively to continue to provide programs and services to their

communities. Every day there are numerous libraries providing virtual story times and activities and ask a librarian service. Even before Covid libraries were using Facebook as one of their main ways to promote their services and programs.

There's a lot of weird information circulating particularly on social media about the pandemic, and IFLA has recently produced a Covid-19 edition of our popular *How To Spot Fake News* infographic. It has a stronger focus on some of the issues encountered around the pandemic – especially the need to check with other sources – and recognises the huge role of social media in spreading information. I am impressed by individual colleagues who have started posting authoritative information about Covid on their own feeds to counter the misinformation.

It's interesting to be on the edge of Twitter and follow the library influencers; my view of the Twitterati is that they are clever, sharp and unforgiving. It is certainly a great place to find out what's going on and how people are reacting. I enjoyed one thread where #librarytwitter was asked about positive things that have come about in your library since the pandemic. There were interesting answers; including an increase of interest in digital services, more people checking out e-books, online resources getting more use, someone

18 **Lankes, David.** "New librarianship." R David Lankes. 2020. davidlankes.org

19 **Whyte, Kenneth.** "Overdue: Throwing the book at libraries." The Globe and Mail. 25 July 2020. theglobeandmail.com

volunteered to be tech support for some to the library's book programs, the death of the business casual dress code, patrons rethinking taking the library as a constant presence for granted, patrons appreciation of curbside pick-up service for reserved items and express service, and great communication from the director and understanding and supportive managers. This is good and helpful information for libraries to use into the future. And we have the rise of library influencers; both within and without the profession, many of them included in this book. The library gurus with their large number of followers and their great popularity are able put into words better than us the value and the impact of libraries for communities.

8. Libraries are Searching for a New Narrative

What is New Librarianship? It is librarianship recast through a focus on communities and knowledge over collections and buildings. It is about the "why" of libraries and librarianship over the "how." It all starts with the mission of the librarian: The mission of librarians is to improve society through facilitating knowledge creation in their communities."¹⁸ (Lankes, 2020)

It is quite likely that libraries will be affected by the financial fallout of the pandemic. Whether this is by neglect and defunding or by attack is still to be played out. Canada's independent bookstores and publishers still see libraries as a threat and a competitor.¹⁹ In an article, firmly rebutted by the Canadian Federation of Library Associations, the author, Kenneth Whyte, accuses libraries of taking sales from bookstores and publishers. It takes issue with library marketing campaigns, and casts libraries as a publicly funded organisations with an unfair advantage over small businesses. While we might wish that such views were in the past, with the financial challenges governments will be facing, libraries need to be ready with their advocacy and their metaphorical swords at the ready.

Public libraries in India are searching for a new direction and without more support they could disappear. This was the view of the late Dr Kaul, Director of Delnet, a staunch supporter of public libraries in India. He saw the need to have more visibility with government and believed there must be a group to advocate for public libraries and convince government that that they need funding and support. His challenge to librarians was to show the relevance of a library to a starving out of work man; to a woman who needs to increase skills for employment; to a businessman who wants to grow his business. He saw a mismatch

20 **Lauersen, Christian.** "Wanted: A new language for the value and impact of libraries." The Library Lab. 21 July 2020. christianlauersen.net

21 **"Partnerships & Collaboration."** Web Junction. 2020. webjunction.org

between public libraries and the public which is growing and the fault is not with the public but with public libraries. Most libraries have no infrastructure, pcs, or internet. The public libraries in India are at a crossroad and there needs to be strong support for public funding and a reinvention of libraries as is being led by the Indian Public Library Movement.

Christian Lauersen, director of Libraries and Citizen Services in Roskilde Municipality, Denmark wants a new language for the value and impact of libraries. He argues that relying on quantitative statistics is not enough. Roskilde Libraries have launched a project that aims to develop a more nuanced understanding of the value that public libraries bring to citizens and societies and create a new language for talking about the value and impact of libraries.²⁰

9. Libraries are Working Together

'When the library builds partnerships, it strengthens the ties to its community, shares resources, and builds positive relationships with diverse stakeholders. Reaching out to initiate community partnerships begins with identifying both traditional and non-traditional partners and exploring new ways to work together. Effective collaborations are sustained through a shared



Libraries working together.
Photo: provided by Priyanka Mohan.

*commitment to serving the ever-changing needs of the community.'*²¹ (*Partnerships & Collaboration, 2020*)

My IFLA presidential theme is 'Let's work together'. There are excellent examples of cooperation between libraries, library associations, government and industry. In Estonia, the National Library is introducing seamless access to all libraries; in Canada public and law libraries are collaborating to solve resourcing issues; library associations are working together to deliver continuing professional development in the MENA region; there is library association cooperation for political impact in Africa; politicians are working with community and libraries in Aarhus; and not forgetting the benefits of acknowledging vendors and suppliers as real partners.

In Russia there are two public library projects that have the potential to revolutionise service delivery. The St Petersburg network of public libraries has achieved the milestone of a single library card and website for 197 public libraries. There is a clear direction to emphasise libraries as art and family spaces – 3rd places where culture occurs. In Moscow, the Russian State Library is driving the *Development of Network of Public Library* project which involves the upgrading of 660 public libraries over the next three years. Model libraries are being established and it is a shared responsibility with federal and regional matching funding. Libraries enjoy good support from the federal Ministry of Culture.

Libraries also partner with other organisations, and Denis Kotov, founder and former CEO of the St Petersburg bookstore chain is a board member of the Russian Book Union (RBU) and is passionate about promoting books and reading. The Russian Book Union is a non-governmental and non-profit organization founded in 2001 and includes all players in the book industry. The RBU is already working with libraries to promote books and is keen to further develop the partnership.

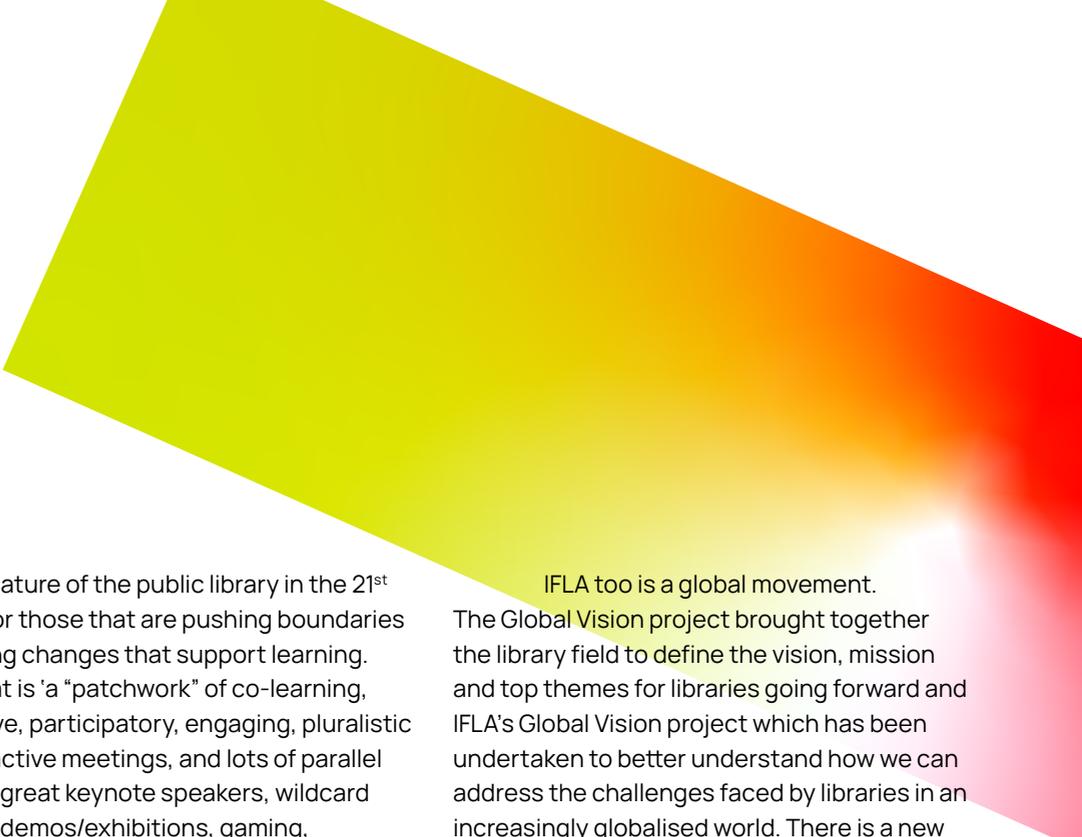
IFLA has partnered with UCLG (United Cities and Local Government.) This global umbrella organisation for cities, local and regional governments, and municipal associations, is advocating strongly for the

recognition of culture as the fourth pillar of development alongside social, environmental and economic sustainability. The vision and objectives of UCLG fit very well with IFLA's agenda, and there are great possibilities and opportunities in IFLA in strengthening the relationship with UCLG with so many public libraries in the world being provided by local government.

10. Libraries are a Global Social Movement

*Our [IFLA] Governing Board and Professional Units are already preparing hundreds of actions to support the global library field. But we need thousands of actions, your actions. Because only with you can we create a truly global movement to improve libraries and people's lives in all parts of the world.*²² (Leitner, 2019)

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Libraries initiated and encouraged many important programs and projects to foster the global library field as a social movement. Next Library created by Aarhus Public Libraries, Denmark is one of these. The purpose of the international gatherings is to look ahead and explore the continuously



evolving nature of the public library in the 21st century for those that are pushing boundaries and making changes that support learning. The format is 'a "patchwork" of co-learning, co-creative, participatory, engaging, pluralistic and interactive meetings, and lots of parallel sessions, great keynote speakers, wildcard sessions, demos/exhibitions, gaming, Networking Dinner Party, Get2Gether, Social un-conferences, Labs and surprises.' Next Library is a movement, and the Next Library Community is here all through the year. The online community connects 1700+ library innovators from 94 countries across the world.

Occupy Library is another example of a library movement that brings together the innovating ideas being implemented in libraries in the Central, Eastern European, Black Sea, Caucasus, and Caspian regions. Its website articulates its strong focus on democracy and the importance of the roles of engaged citizens, the state and local actors: institutions, organizations, civic groups. The theme of their 2020 conference is *Serving communities in times of crisis* and the potential impact of the pandemic on citizens, communities, learning, literacy, culture, and libraries. Topics will include: public-civic partnerships, civic engagement, democratic literacy, partnerships for democracy.

IFLA too is a global movement.

The Global Vision project brought together the library field to define the vision, mission and top themes for libraries going forward and IFLA's Global Vision project which has been undertaken to better understand how we can address the challenges faced by libraries in an increasingly globalised world. There is a new energy and drive in IFLA as the global voice of libraries.

Conclusion

The innovation and creativity that has been shown over the last six months makes me very optimistic that libraries will continue to play an essential and important role in their communities going forward. But the challenges cannot be minimised. Funding is the biggest challenge and the financial impact of the pandemic is going to be huge. Governments around the world at all levels and of all persuasions will be massively impacted and this must affect libraries. We must prepare to fight for libraries as never before and plan for managing the new reality of economic uncertainty, the wellbeing of library users and staff, and how to adapt services. If we keep our values and principles front of all we do we can change things for the better going forward, and libraries have an important role to play in making the world a better place.

About the author

Allison Dobbie has worked in public libraries in New Zealand since 1975, most recently as general manager of Auckland Libraries: a network of 55 libraries serving 1,5 million people. She has contributed to developments in public library strategy, public lending rights, censorship, national digitisation initiatives, digital access and professional registration.

Allison was a member of the Bertelsmann International Network for Public Libraries; a Strategic Adviser to the Gates Foundation Global Libraries Programme; and a mentor for cohort 2 of the Global INELI programme. She and Christine Mackenzie established the first regional INELI programme, INELI Oceania, and Allison chaired this group from 2013 till 2018. Recently she has focussed on the creation of a Pacific Libraries Network, to help give libraries across the Pacific Ocean a strong voice.



Libraries of the Pacific Islands

by Allison Dobbie (New Zealand)

The island nations of the Pacific region are among the most extraordinary, the most beautiful, the most remote, the most diverse and the most vulnerable in the world. Against all the odds they offer a range of library services which are remarkable in their resilience, innovation and courage. It is not possible to understand library services in the Pacific without taking into account their unique context.

The largest of the Pacific nations is Papua New Guinea. Its population of 8 million people who live across 600 islands represent 10,000 ethnic groups and 800 distinct languages. Fiji which has one of the most developed economies in the Pacific has a population of 900,000 across an archipelago of more than 300 islands, one third of which are inhabited. Fiji has four official languages. Kiribati (population 120,000) is made up of 33 coral atolls, a total land area of 811km² spread across an area of 3.5 million km², which is larger than India. The smallest Pacific nations are Tuvalu and Nauru, each with populations of 11,000. With a land area of 26km², Tuvalu is the fourth smallest country in the world.

The region consists of 3 main areas, Micronesia in the northern Pacific, Melanesia in the west and Polynesia in the east. The term Oceania includes Australia and New Zealand in the south. Distances are vast. Fiji is 4 hours flying time from Sydney and 7 hours from

Honolulu. The frequency and duration of travel between islands by air or ship is a major factor in all aspects of life. Geographically many islands are low lying atolls and therefore already subject to sea rise. Others are volcanic and forest clad with few roads. All are prone to damage from hurricanes and earthquakes. Tropical climates add further challenges as diverse as health care, or protection of library and museum collections.

Major Challenges for Libraries

Colonialism continues to be a factor in the political and economic life of Pacific nations, with most not achieving independence until the 1970's and 1980's. Most recently Timor-Leste achieved independence from Indonesia in 2002. France, the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand continue to maintain some form of territorial governance in a number of islands, for example New Caledonia and Tahiti (France); American Samoa, Guam, Northern Marianas (USA); Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau (New Zealand), and Norfolk Island (Australia). These are therefore all relatively young nations though with a long and distinctive cultural and language identity that has been at risk of loss over time. Now they are also grappling with new forms of economic and political influence from superpowers keen to access natural resources



associated with fisheries, forests and minerals. Tourism is the other major economic activity for the Pacific island nations: they are rightly the epitome of tropical paradise destinations.

So Pacific Island nations face complex challenges. They are among the world's most vulnerable and least developed nations as defined by the United Nations. They are still developing strong and reliable internet connections with the world. They are grappling with survival in terms of climate change, ocean pollution and fisheries depletion, health and cultural heritage. Development aid from international agencies is important though not always maintained in a manner which enables sustainable responses. Remoteness has helped limit the spread of Covid-19 into Pacific nations, but the loss of tourism income is severely affecting their economies. No wonder that Pacific nations have embraced the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, in particular those relating to climate change and

the future of our oceans and have added their strong voices to take international leadership in these areas.

And in this context, no wonder that libraries too face major challenges, in particular related to funding, collections, buildings, technology, training and recognition. Yet there are examples throughout the Pacific of innovative service solutions and librarians determined to deliver the best services possible. One of the notable characteristics of Pacific libraries is the multipurpose role they play, to maximise access. The various national libraries tend to act as or provide support to public libraries, and school libraries where they exist are sometimes also publicly accessible. National archives tend to perform a wider role in collection building and digitisation, for example in Fiji and Tuvalu where digital storytelling is revitalising interest in traditional cultural practice and identity. University libraries also contribute to public accessibility.



Therefore, the concept of a 'public library' is very broad. Very few library buildings are modern, or purpose built, yet they are used to the maximum possible for programmes and study. Programmes will often move beyond buildings to the outdoors. The Buk bilong Pikinini programme which is funded entirely by a philanthropic trust is an entirely mobile 'pop-up' programme which takes books and literacy activities to remote schools across Papua New Guinea.

Local official language publishing (including English or French) is very limited, and additionally very few materials are published in local indigenous languages. Library collections budgets are very small. Therefore, there is a still a lot of reliance on imported materials, and more reliance than desired on second-hand materials donated by well-meaning agencies overseas. Most libraries offer computer and internet access as an essential service because the majority of private homes do not have this, however telecommunications links are often patchy and unreliable. Internet and mobile data penetration in the Pacific islands remain the lowest in the world.

Professional library qualifications are offered by a number of institutions including the University of the South Pacific in Suva in Fiji. However ongoing access to professional development and other library related training

is an ongoing challenge because of the small scale and geographic remoteness, and career progression opportunities are limited. Funding is provided by central and local government, though this is never generous nor sufficient. Most libraries also rely on some form of donation to support and develop their services, including donations of money, collections, buildings and building materials. The first ever Tongan community library in the village of Kolovai was opened in 2019 based entirely on funding, donations and labour from New Zealand and is run by local volunteers.

Collaborative Frameworks and Opportunities for Libraries of the Pacific

In 2013 the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation decided to fund a regional version of its INELI (International Network of Emerging Library Innovators) programme in the Oceania region. Over 4 years and 2 cohorts, the INELI Oceania programme brought together 34 young leaders from Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste, and Vanuatu, together with 10 sponsors and 6 mentors.



Pacific Libraries Network, Suva (Fiji) 2018.

As a result of the programme they have all learned to advocate, how to innovate and how to lead change. Many secured new roles and they have become confident presenters including at international conferences for some.

During the programme the INELI Oceania Steering Group became increasingly aware of the leadership challenges faced by library colleagues from Pacific Island nations. A Pacific Library Summit was organised with support from the Gates Foundation and IFLA. It gathered over 100 library leaders, decision makers and influencers from across the Pacific in Suva in May 2018. Its purpose was to strengthen leadership, build advocacy skills, raise awareness of the role of libraries and create opportunities for a collaborative regional network. It also included workshops on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and the role of libraries in helping to achieve them. It was the first such gathering of Pacific Island libraries.

The outcome of the summit was a 'Statement of Intent' that included 8 strategic goals, relating to developing legislative and policy frameworks, advocacy, literacy, cultural heritage, collaboration, capacity building, equitable access to information, and support for the SDG's. Subsequently a 'Pacific Libraries Network Compact' was published, a Pacific Libraries Network Facebook group formed, and a Strategic Action Plan developed. There has been a real surge of activity particularly at national level, with a significant number of SDG workshops and promotions held as far afield as Kiribati and Samoa. There has also been more focus on strategic initiatives, including the adoption of a national strategy for library development by the government of Papua New Guinea, strategic recognition of the importance of libraries and archives by the government of Tuvalu, and development of a library policy including potential library legislation currently underway in Vanuatu. The Facebook pages of individual national and local Pacific libraries indicate exciting programmes and heroic, inspirational leadership.

Sustaining a regional approach is more difficult given the distances and the energy needed just to progress local initiatives. It is my belief that a regional approach offers significant potential benefits where small scale and limited resources are prevalent, for example for development of shared training, shared literacy and programme resources, and shared advocacy. Ongoing and coordinated support from wealthier Asia Pacific neighbours and international library development agencies is essential to help build and sustain collaborative frameworks and opportunities across the libraries of Pacific Island nations.



Pacific Libraries Network, Suva (Fiji) 2018.

Regional collaborative initiatives in any part of the world rely on strong relationships based on trust, mutual benefit and mutual respect. Such relationships take time and need proactive opportunities to grow, especially where there may be an imbalance of power and resource among the partners. A quote attributed to poet Ryunosuke Satoro is a powerful metaphor for the libraries of the Pacific Ocean: 'Individually we are one drop, together we are an ocean.' The following contributions by four of the outstanding leaders of Pacific Island libraries further illustrate these points, as they share their situation, their challenges and achievements and their aspirations for the future. There is no doubt that with the right support, libraries in the Pacific will grow to be an inspiration to all.

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Storm damage, Vanuatu 2020

Port Vila Library, Vanuatu

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opened 2019

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About the author

Kakaito Kasi is director general of Libraries and Archives, Papua New Guinea, a role he has held since 2015. He has a Masters degree in Strategic Management from the University of Papua New Guinea.



Papua New Guinea

by Kakaito Kasi
(Papua New Guinea)

Library services in Papua New Guinea functioned in all 23 provincial capitals during the colonial era prior to independence from Australia in 1975. In 1985 the Papua New Guinea government passed a law called 'The Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Government' which gave all powers to the provincial or municipal governments to manage their own affairs. Most municipal governments neglected the importance of libraries, as a result most public libraries collapsed and only six have survived. With support from the National Library of Papua New Guinea, many schools introduced school libraries to cater for the needs of their students, however these services were supported for only a short time.

Library services in the country are also supported by an NGO called 'Buk Bilong Pikinini' or 'Children's Books' which targets early childhood and all school age children. They serve the under five-year olds in the morning and the students after lunch. There are also NGOs and individual, bigger institutions like the universities that provide library services to the people of Papua New Guinea. The National Library Service which is the government sanctioned agency was unable to deliver these services due to lack of commitment and support from the government over the years.

The library services provided through National Library were minimal as a result, and

inadequate to support student learning needs. There were no internet services and the National Library of Papua New Guinea had not yet adopted the modern means of delivering services. The National Parliament in 1993 passed the 'Office of Library and Archives Act' which made provisions for library and archives services to be restored or revived in the country, however that part of the legislation was never implemented. As a result, library services continued to languish for a further 23 years. During this period, the National Library's administrative functions of accounting, budgeting, human resource management, and other services were managed by the Department of Education. The Department of Education decided on appropriations for the National Library and these arrangements were not always in the best interest of the library services, hindering further development and culminating in a service crisis and collapse in 2012.

A Period of Change

Following a period of review, the National Executive Council of Papua New Guinea changed the leadership of the Office of Library and Archives and appointed myself, Kakaito Kasi as the director general in 2015. Under my leadership the National Library and Archives of Papua New Guinea developed a 10-year strategic plan titled 'National Library,



Proposed Provincial Library and Archives.

Archives and Records Services Strategic Plan 2016-2025'. The plan focuses on three key pillars: (1) improving the management capacity of the library services for better service delivery; (2) creating partnership for better service delivery at the national, provincial and local level government; (3) develop and implement key policies and directives for sustainable, fair, equal and quality distribution of library and archives services.

The plan was launched on the 28th of February 2017 by the minister for Education Nick Kuman and then approved and supported by the national government in December 2017. The National Executive Council of Papua New Guinea approved the plan and the first ever parliamentary statement on the development of both library and archives services was delivered on the floor of Papua New Guinea Parliament on 30th of May 2018.

The National Executive Council then directed key government agencies like

the department of Treasury, Department of National Planning and Monitoring, department of Personnel Management and department of Finance to assist both the National Library and Archives to improve its manpower capacities, financial management systems, and securing sufficient funding to sustain its operations. These directives enable both the National Library and Archives to increase its manpower capacities from just 48 staff to 601 staff. These 601 staff cover all 23 provincial archivists, public librarians, district librarians and administration support staff. The management capacity is captured in the 10-year strategic plan and according to the plan the staff appointment, training and posting will be completed in 2025. The greatest impediment faced by the library was its manpower to deliver services to most of the populace and this was achieved through the development of a roadmap via the ten-year plan.

Earlier on I mentioned the administrative functions of budgeting, accounting, HR and payroll and other functions which were managed



Proposed Library and Archives Infrastructures.

by the department of Education. These services have been transferred to the National Library and Archives as its manpower capacity has been strengthened. The transition commenced with the national government approving separate budget lines for both the National Library and Archives in November 2019 and gradually concluded in June 2020 with the transfer of payroll functions. The National Library and Archives now manages these functions, and this now paves the way for major developments in the fields of both library and archives in the country.

The delivery of library services is gradually taking its form and it is expected that in the next five years all public libraries will be restored in all provinces. Below is a concept design for both public libraries and provincial archives buildings which it is expected will be replicated throughout the country. This concept is similar to the library infrastructure that is on Waiheke Island in New Zealand but with the inclusion of provincial archives.

A New Model

The National Library, Archives and Records Services Strategic Plan 2016 to 2025, enables both National Library and Archives to improve its infrastructures to cater for the establishment of an information center at Waigani, the civic heart of the capital city Port Moresby. There is a concept design to establish a Pacific Information Centre that will house all Pacific and Papua New Guinea information. The concept design below shows the unique cultural feature that we Papua New Guinean people treasure as our national pride. It is a Kundu in Pidgin (broken English) or a drum. In Port Moresby the national parliament building is a design of a traditional men's house, we call it haus tambaran; at the nearby water front Ela Beach is a design based on a traditional voyaging canoe used for trade called Lakatoi, and at the Administration Centre next to parliament this proposed building, the Kundu building, which signifies sound information sent to people for singing and dancing.

Many schools in this country do not have school libraries, as a result students struggle with their learning. In city schools the students have opportunities to access books and other materials using the internet. The National Library, Archives and Records Services 10-year plan makes provisions to have teacher librarians posted in all schools to teach and provide library services. The current trend of developments taking place at the National Library will greatly support the government's key policy on delivering quality education to all children.

In the city of Port Moresby, there is a program titled 'library on wheels' where a large book bus moves from school to school, suburb to suburb giving opportunities for students and the public to have access to library books. I have also developed a revenue model to generate revenue for the National Library to sustain its programs. The model is widely supported by the department of Treasury. All services provided by the National Library are free but there are other services for which users will have to pay a minimal fee. The revenue model has now been implemented effectively at the National Library.

I have a dream for the National Library, that dream is to ensure that the National Library and public or municipal libraries become the second home for every user. All libraries in Papua New Guinea must reach the standard of library services provided in other countries.

I want to make sure that the agency continues to advocate to the national government the importance of these services and the national government continues to support these vital services.

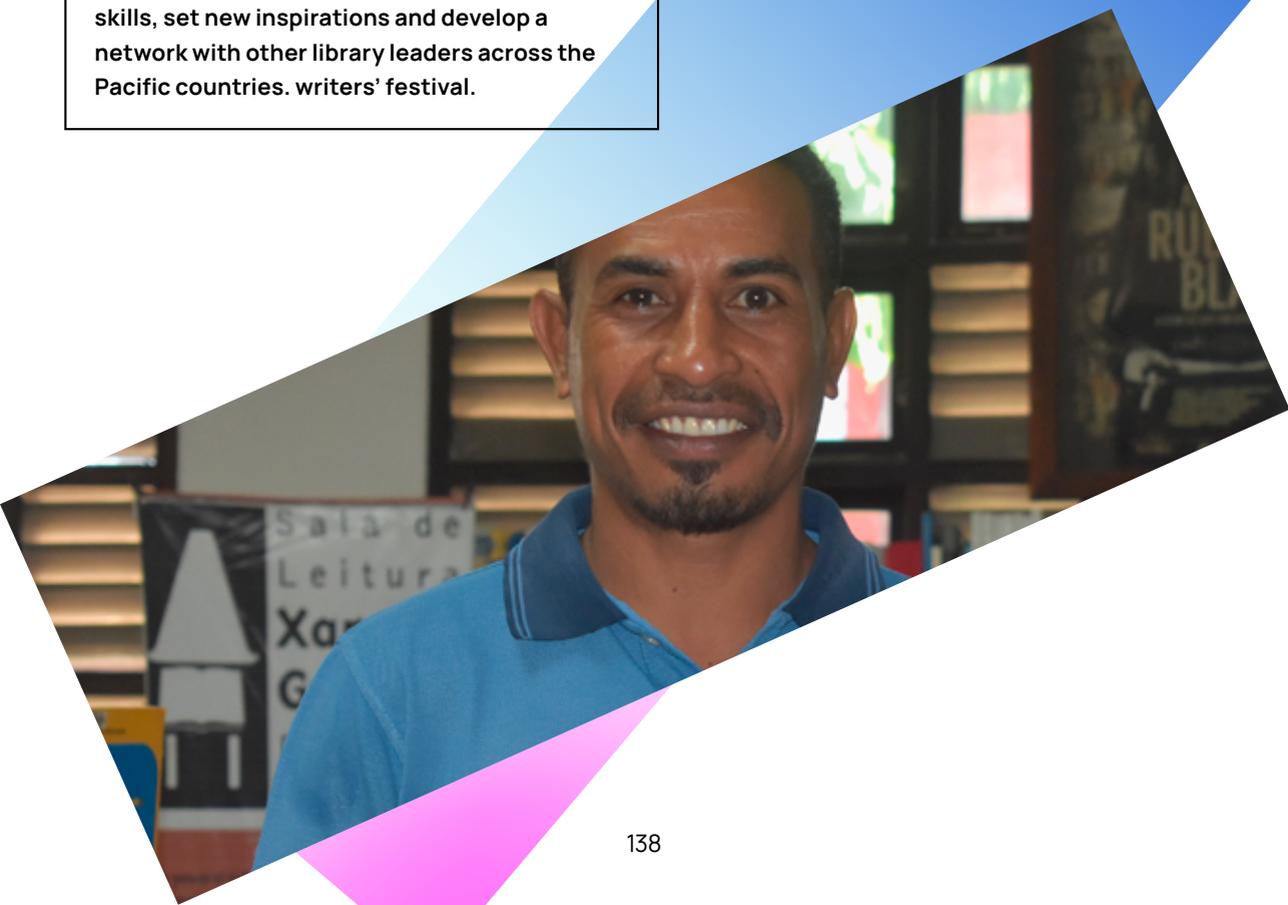
The greatest challenge for the libraries is to train visionary leaders who can drive all library services forward as I have done in the last 5 years. If I am reappointed as director general after 2022, I will make sure that 75 percent of the targets in the 10-year plans are successfully achieved. I am confident that I have achieved 25 percent of the plan so far as the achievements have been stated.



Buk bilong Pikinini supports Papua New Guinean children with access to high quality books and literacy programs.

About the author

Gaspar Freitas joined the XGRR in June 2015 and for him it is a journey of learning as he did not have previous experience in the library and museum services. Gaspar was a youth programme manager at Search For Common Ground (SFCG), an international NGO branch in Dili. The first year was very challenging but he was happy to find he could continue his work for the youth in Timor-Leste through this role. From 2016 to 2018, Gaspar participated in the INELI Oceania Course (International Network of Emerging Library Innovators). The INELI Oceania was a great leadership learning experience for him participating in convenings, professional development teams and online sharing forums. It has given him the opportunity to learn new skills, set new inspirations and develop a network with other library leaders across the Pacific countries. writers' festival.



Libraries in Timor-Leste

by Gaspar Freitas (Timor-Leste)

Timor-Leste is the newest nation in Asia: 14,874 square kilometres in size, it consists of the eastern half of the island of Timor and the nearby islands of Atauro and Jaco. It is located 400 kilometres northwest of Australia. Colonised by Portugal for over 450 years and then occupied by Indonesia for 24 years, Timor-Leste declared independence on 28 November 1975, but was invaded by Indonesia nine days later. On 30 August 1999, in a UN-sponsored referendum the majority of Timorese voted for independence from Indonesia. Timor-Leste was then administered by the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), established on 25 October 1999. Timor-Leste became formally independent on 20 May 2002 and became a member of the UN on 27 September 2002.

Timor-Leste has 13 municipalities and Dili is the capital of the country. The official languages are Tetun and Portuguese, while English and Bahasa Indonesia are working languages under the Constitution. In June 2000 the Xanana Gusmão Reading Room (XGRR) was founded by the first lady Kirsty Sword Gusmão. It was established as a not-for-profit organisation with the purpose of providing the first public library to operate in Timor-Leste after the end of the Indonesian occupation. It provided library and reference services to the Dili community and particularly young people whose studies were interrupted or terminated

by political events beyond their control. It also serves to display the awards and presentations made to Timor-Leste through Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, its first president.

Today, 20 years later the Xanana Gusmão Reading Room is the leading library in Timor-Leste, a popular destination for locals and visitors alike, and holding the most comprehensive reference collection of Timorese material. Developing library services in Timor-Leste has been challenging: as with any developing nation, funding is lacking, there are far more urgent priorities such as food and water security and medical needs. Literacy rates are high at over 50%, however the culture of reading is low. The number of languages spoken and a fledgling publishing industry add to the challenges of developing library collections and services.

Public Libraries in Timor-Leste

The Xanana Gusmão Reading Room (XGRR) was the first public library to operate in Timor-Leste after the end of the Indonesian occupation. It is the premier public library in Timor and in recent years has helped rejuvenate community libraries in the municipalities of Aileu, Baucau, Ermera, Lautem, and Bobonaro-Lolotoe.



Mobile Library TUK TUK.

Currently there are around 16 public libraries across the country. Apart from the XGRR, all are small, underfunded and generally housed in poorly maintained buildings with volunteer staff and little if any internet access. The outlook is positive however, the XGRR and UNESCO have recently trained a number of community library staff, introduced the KOHA Library Management System into 6 libraries and launched Timor-Leste's first web-based union catalogue in the Tetun language. Users across the globe are able to access the catalogue of partner libraries via this URL link xgrlibrary.org. Community mobile libraries are being introduced in Dili with the assistance of NGO's Alola and the XGRR. Funding and stock generally come from friendship groups, NGO's and international aid organisations outside. Publications in the Tetun language are growing slowly.

Special Libraries of Centro Nacional Chega (CNC)

This special library houses special collections on human rights issues and the Timorese resistance. A permanent exhibition 'Chega' displays information about Timor-Leste's struggle for independence and human-rights violations that occurred during the Indonesian occupation. The exhibition includes testimonial videos. Currently, the CNC have 566 catalogued items, has reopened for public access, additional staff are being recruited and additional collection content is being sourced.



National Library

Timor-Leste has a National Library Directorate (Direção Nacional de Bibliotecas) that is planning the new National Library building and acquiring collections. This is a joint project with a local oil company whereby the government will provide the land and the oil company will build and fit out the new library. Whilst a site has been selected and staff employed, progress has stalled. Staff have received library training in Portugal but are limited in Dili by lack of internet and housing. Current offices for the library team and the collections are in converted shipping containers.

Timor-Leste Library Association – ABITL

The Asosiasaun Biblioteka no Informasaun Timor Leste (ABITL) is the Timor-Leste Library and Information Association. The Association has had periods of inactivity since being created in 2004. Currently the ABITL has been reactivated with a new structure and is working with the National Library Directorate preparing for a conference and training session in late 2020 or early 2021. The ABITL will continue to take the lead as an important professional library institution to advocate, lobby and develop library services and improve librarians' skills in Timor-Leste.

School Libraries

Timor-Leste has a small number of school libraries. During the war libraries and schools were destroyed, some have been rebuilt and new teachers trained but facilities remain very basic. Currently there are 82 school libraries in 1,437 schools in Timor-Leste. 1,282 primary schools (public schools 1,093 and private schools 189) and 155 secondary level schools (public schools 94 and private schools 61). (Source: Education Management Information Systems (EMIS – Ministry of Education, June 2018)

A new public education curriculum has been introduced in recent years, this has led to the production of some excellent supporting materials, especially in the primary education sector. Story books and science materials have been produced in Tetun and in other local languages. The ministry of Education has introduced e-books. ebook.tls.tl

Each year the ministry of Education funds the printing and distribution of books to all schools. However, often these books are left in boxes and not used due to the lack of adequate facilities, such as shelves and dedicated space. The current political situation will not see any upgrading to school libraries this year, but it is hoped once there is political agreement to pass the state budget

the situation will improve. The Dili International School and the Escola Portuguesa in Dili are both non-government schools which have well-resourced libraries for their students. There are also a large number of Catholic schools both primary and secondary throughout Timor-Leste funded by various Catholic missions and orders.

University Libraries

There are a number of private universities with well-used libraries using digital catalogues. Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL) is Timor's only public university. The UNTL library uses the SLIM library system, housing 15 thousand books. Teaching and collections are in the Portuguese, English and Bahasa Indonesia languages. Textbooks in Tetun have not been developed to date. Collection acquisition and management is therefore difficult. Currently there are 6 libraries servicing the faculties of Health & Social Sciences, Agriculture and Law, Education, Economy and Management, Engineering and Technology. Additionally, there are four specialist research libraries.



Book distribution at Community Library Ermera.

Personal Innovations and Local Solutions

Despite all the challenges, my role as manager of the XGRR has been enormously rewarding and I believe the XGRR has contributed significantly to library development in Timor-Leste and has hosted a range of educational and other activities aimed at nurturing pride in East Timorese culture and promoting skills development through events, discussions and promotion of local art. The XGRR has worked hard to encourage a love of reading amongst the Timorese community and to showcase positive growth in Timor-Leste to international visitors.

We deliver our programmes in partnership with community, government and non-government organisations and UN agencies. Pre-school programs, high school and school holiday events, literacy seminars, special events and exhibitions are some of the programmes we deliver. Outreach services to district libraries has created Timor-Leste's first web-based union catalogue in the Tetun language. Collaboration with the Hatutan youth group in 2016 saw the XGRR host Timor's first Rainbow March, celebrating the LGBT community.

Local solutions to increase literacy include the XGRR self-publishing material using personnel stories from their 'Memoria 1999' exhibition about the struggle for independence; publishing a trilingual comic book 'Alicia's Diary' containing stories to help

children learn science and mathematics, and producing a fiction book titled 'Liberdade lha Naroman' by a young local author.

We continue to learn from our customers about their needs and expectations through face to face talks and feedback collected annually through customer satisfaction surveys. In the outdoor Uma Mahon (Shade Space) we offer language classes (English for children and adults, Portuguese class, AutoCAD class, writing class and public speaking). We also hold public seminars, workshops and discussion groups on contemporary health, education, agriculture, and current political issues. We have used these activities to encourage the youth to develop volunteer teams and to take the lead in educational activities and special programs and events in our community.

In 2020 the board of management and staff launched a new community innovation to encourage reading. A TUK TUK motorcycle donated by Xanana Gusmão was converted to a mobile library operating in recreation places around Dili city. Our priorities in 2020 are producing the second edition of 'Alicia's Diary', Mambae Mother Tongue Project, introducing the digital library system 'Koha' to remote libraries and the Debt of Honour Exhibition Project, the latter being an exhibition on the boundaries of friendship between East-Timor and Australia leaving Australia with a debt of

honour to pay. In the future, the XGRR will need a sustainable funding base to deliver its services and programmes and to become a modern library with good cultural integration in all areas. Funding for museum content and digitalisation, increasing Tetun literature and other mother tongue materials, encouraging community research activities, children and parent education programmes, and supporting other public libraries in collaboration with the National Library Directorate will require additional funds.

Conclusion

Given the continued development all sectors in Timor-Leste, libraries and reading can contribute meaningfully and are a powerful weapon in our country's reconstruction. It can lift literacy levels and educate against ignorance. The best hope is the continued growth of the XGRR and the community-based libraries, the construction of the National Library and the further development of Tetun language materials across all education levels. Funding for libraries across all sectors is still the biggest challenge followed by skills training.

Since working at the XGRR, I know how important this space is for learning about our culture, our independence history and promoting a life-long love of reading and learning. I feel privileged to work here by serving those children and youth who will

become future leaders of my beloved country. We provide a safe place for all people to meet and talk and provide access to information and technology. I hope our community can utilise libraries for improving their lives through sharing knowledge, accessing educational resources and training. I want to deliver a community with a better knowledge of science and technology, preserve our culture and express the pride of self-identity as Timorese. By building a culture of dialogue, a democratic society, development based on research and acting together with the community at the grassroots level I know we can achieve it.

To get the latest news about XGRR, follow us on:
facebook.com/xananagusmaoreadingroom
and xananagusmaoreadingroom.com

About the author

Bula Vinaka and Noa'ia, my name is Lorin Pai and I hail from the beautiful island of Rotuman in Fiji. I am Course Coordinator for the Certificate & Diploma in Library/Information Studies at the University of the South Pacific in Suva.

I graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce and Diploma in Library & Information Studies from the University of the South Pacific and am currently pursuing a master's degree in Library/Information Studies with Charles Sturt University, Australia.

Over the past eighteen years, my library work experience mainly focused on acquisitions, reference work and cataloguing. I started my career as a paraprofessional library assistant in academic libraries before joining corporate libraries. Most recently I was librarian at the Reserve Bank of Fiji for 7 years before moving on to teaching library studies. I have also recently been involved in community grassroots initiatives conducting reading sessions for children, providing training for single mothers and youths and promoting the importance of lifelong learning skills for all.



Pacific Libraries:

Portrait of Fiji Libraries

by Lorin Pai (Fiji Islands)

'Education is your life – guard it well' (Comfort, 2011). These are the sentimental words taught from childhood in a Pacific context. It was a school break in Levuka in 1989, when a family friend invited me to the Morris Hedstrom (MH) building to play table tennis. To my surprise it was a library which did not have enough lights and there was merely a handful of books of adult and children's literature. As we entered the door, a soft voice asked us: 'Are you kids here to play or read?' and we replied play! We were guided through a side door that led to the table tennis room. The ceiling and the top of the bookshelves were visible from the table tennis room, hence there were no quiet reading spaces in the library. At that time I did not know that this was the first reading room in Fiji, with links to the first formal library setup established by Rev. William Moore, a Methodist missionary in the 1800's (James, 1985).

Levuka was known then as the seaport for missionaries and merchants. Investors visiting the town would donate volumes of reading resources. The library was used either for entertainment purposes or storage spaces for government departments. By the mid 1870's the reading room was converted to a Mechanics Institute and a printing centre. Interestingly, the first 'Fijian Weekly News and Planters' journals and government gazettes were published in Levuka in 1871 (Plumbe, 1984).

In 1877, Suva became the capital of Fiji and established its first Suva Town Board library which was housed within the newly built Queen Victoria Memorial Hall, known today as the Ming Palace. In 1907, Andrew Carnegie offered the Suva Town Board a substantial amount of money to construct a standalone library for the capital and signed an agreement that the library provided circulation services from 7.30am to 9.00pm free of charge (Plumbe, 1984). Today the library is known as the Suva Carnegie Library and it is located on Victoria Parade. The library appointed its first Chief Librarian Edward David in 1975.

In 1964 through the British government grant, Fiji was able to open its first Western Regional library located in Lautoka. Robert Pearce, who was appointed as Chief Librarian in 1963 with four assistants, endorsed its first book selection policy and adopted the 16th ed. Dewey decimal classification system to catalogue 14,800 books (Plumbe, 1984). In 1965 the library received a film projector from the Victoria (Australia) Rotary Club and held its first Library Advisory Committee. Pearce submitted a memorandum entitled 'Public library service in Fiji: policy proposal' to the Colonial Secretary for the formation of a Public Libraries Advisory Council to set public library service policies and standards for the country. The proposal was endorsed in March 1966 and under the new legislation, the Public Library

Board of Fiji was established to work with the appointed ministry on the development of Fiji libraries. That year the library services resumed supply of books to the Levuka township board library. A decade later in 1976 the Western Regional Library was fortunate to receive two mobile libraries through the British Council grant valued at 20,000 pounds. And under the 'scheme of cooperative library services to western townships' the Sigatoka, Nadi and Ba Town Board opened their first libraries with a thousand books for circulation.

Library Services of Fiji (LSF) is the government agency responsible for the development of school and public libraries. As part of the ministry of Education, Heritage and the Arts (MEHA), it helps deliver the state's objectives relating to the physical and intellectual learning environment of public, school and community libraries and ensuring students receive quality education access. To date LSF has established 31 community libraries across the archipelago (ministry of Education, 2020) and continues to supply reading resources, furniture and training to schools and public libraries. Today, Fiji also has five well-structured public libraries and four municipality libraries located across the country.

Fiji does not have a National Library. The role of national repository of Fiji's documentary heritage is undertaken by the



Suva Carnegie Library, 1860's.

National Archives of Fiji, located in the capital city of Suva. It includes the Sir Alport Barker Library established in 1954. National Archives focusses on safeguarding the public records and cultural heritage of Fiji and the Pacific region (Fiji, 2020). It is also part of the ministry of Education and while both departments function separately, their objectives remain the same and that is to support and strengthen the creation of a knowledgeable Fiji.

Developments

Over the decades libraries have continued to evolve from traditional confined spaces to open modern concepts, particularly since the inception of television and the internet through the Fiji International Telecommunication Pte Limited (FINTEL) in 1976 (Batiri, 1998). Libraries in Fiji gradually moved



Suva Carnegie Library, 100th Anniversary.

from the perception of owning the collection to providing access for their users (Tabalala, 2002). Libraries have become more visible within their organisations and communities through cross functional activities. For instance, the Reserve Bank of Fiji launched its 2012 library week activities on World Book Day in March, building up to the National Library Week celebration in September. Reserve Bank Governor Mr. Whiteside in his statement acknowledged libraries as the gateway to knowledge, self-esteem and empowerment (Rachna, 2015). Books collected from the book drive were distributed to school and community libraries with a printer and two computers which had financial literacy tutorials software installed.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Art (MEHA) as part of its core function to provide efficient library services to schools and communities purchased an off the shelf Library Management System software (LMS) Liberty 5 and installed security doors and computer facilities for their libraries in 2016 (Ministry of Education, 2020). These facilities empowered and upskilled library staff to update their collection catalogue efficiently and provide effective service through the Online Public Access Catalogue.

In 1989 Fiji Library Association (FLA) held its 9th Biennial convention with the theme 'Reaching out to rural libraries' to identify

the special needs of the rural communities (Association, 1989). The same concept was adopted by LSF to establish community libraries in rural and outer islands. In addition to this, LSF provides well-designed workshops to educate the grassroots people on the importance of reading and train school librarians. Similarly, from a passion-driven approach, individuals have established reading clubs in communities. For instance, the founder of Vunilagi book club, Mariana Waqa established her first reading club in 2017 at the Nanuku settlement. Mariana had a passion for books and a vision to empower young Fijians towards a better future (Simmons, 2018). Also, other readings clubs have emerged from Veirasi and Vatuwaqa settlements in 2019.

Collaboration and Advocacy

Through collaboration in 2005, the Western Regional Library Lautoka opened its American Corner with resources and computers to assist students with their research needs and experience makerspace programs on the weekends free of charge (Suva, 2020). In the same way, in 2018 the LSF library in Suva received a sponsorship of 6000 books and computers, reading desks and chairs for their China space. The interest of developing libraries grew within corporate and non-government organisations to have



Collaboration and advocacy outreach.

team bonding opportunities and giving back to the community. Also, in 2010, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a contract with the University of the South Pacific library to establish a depository library there to promote and disseminate their knowledge products with university students. ADB currently maintains a network of about 155 depository libraries in 44 member countries (Sun Fiji, 2010).

With a minimum budget for public and school libraries, LSF continues to maintain the collections for their libraries and professional development for library staff through partnership with embassies and related associations, such as the Fiji Human Resources Institute to provide soft skills training for young professionals. For instance, in 2014 the American Resource Centre (ARC) invited librarians from public, special and community libraries to attend a one-day workshop on Advanced Concept in Information Management. Such opportunities assisted participants in tailoring their library services to meet the needs of their patrons. In addition, FLA held host evenings for their members and extended an invitation to the Library Information Studies (LIS) students studying at USP.

In view of strengthening partnership, FLA participated in the 2019 Vodafone ATH Multi-disciplinary conference to advocate how libraries can add value and help with

the development and success of individuals, communities and the economy. From this platform, a representative from the police force welcomed the idea of setting up mini libraries for their police across the country. While this has yet to be rolled out strategically, there is much need to equip passionate information providers with the required skills. There has been further discussion between FLA and the Alliance for Youth to explore partnership opportunities with youth to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

In 2018, through the Pacific Libraries Network, librarians from the Pacific and local networks gathered for a Library Advocacy Day, Pacific Libraries Summit and Pacific Libraries Network Kickoff Convening to collectively agree on the 'Statement of Intent and Compact' to encourage information providers how to look beyond the challenges they were facing and work towards achieving positive and realistic goals that would contribute to the development of their libraries, keeping them viable in their communities. Moreover, at the 2019 IFLA conference President's session in Athens, I made a request that IFLA needs to be more visible in the Pacific. Not many librarians know about the role of IFLA and the opportunities that are available for developing their countries (Associations, 2019).

Dreams for the Future

With the recent confirmation that His Excellency, President of Fiji Joji Konrote has agreed to be the Patron for Fiji libraries, librarians need to take a business approach on how to utilize their resources and human capacity to advocate the roles of libraries to decision-makers and potential donors. Librarians need to have an open mind and readiness to learn and explore opportunities to share their potential sources of great ideas, which promotes positive interaction.

The global pandemic has brought about reduction to library budgets and is forcing libraries to close, leaving library professionals and technicians unemployed across the globe. While the current situation is seen as a threat to the profession, returning to the new normal will require a proactive strategic approach. For instance, in 1972 the Carnegie library closed for four weeks due to the destruction caused by Hurricane Bebe. Though the library was used as an evacuation centre a total of 79,000 books were circulated for home reading and this remains a significant service to the community.

Libraries and information professionals need to be subscribed with local, regional and international library associations and networks

to access resources and training materials that would enhance their current library policies and practices. For instance, in August LIS students and prospective students were invited to a Talanoa evening session to motivate, empower and equip them with knowledge and practical skills that they could use in their workspaces. Hence, it is critical that libraries continuously collaborate and engage with their communities to keep them viable and relevant.

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About the author

Christophe Augias acts as director at Bibliothèque Bernheim, territorial library of New Caledonia. He was trained at ENSSSIB, the French national school of library curators and entered librarianship as a profession in 1997. Amongst other projects, he was involved in the creation of several libraries and of New Caledonia's writers' festival.



New Caledonia

by
Christophe Augias (New Caledonia)

Libraries in New-Caledonia have both a long history and a surge of recent developments. The first public library was the Bernheim Library, opened in 1904. The library's mission was to serve the whole island but for a long time it acted as a central library located in the capital city of Noumea. Only during the late 1970's did it start to implement a bibliobus service on the island. This unit was hardly efficient, New Caledonia being a large island (400 km long, 270,000 people today) with dirt roads back in those days.

In the late 1990's, New Caledonia decided to strengthen the library. By then, a handful of city councils had built libraries. Local training programs were then implemented and the Bernheim library started to act as a support for municipalities planning to create a library by providing training, advice and book loans. At the same time the Caledonian Documentary Network (called Redocal) was created, with centralized library software provided free of charge to new and existing libraries. These efforts boosted the development of a network of 25 libraries on the island. Most of these are part of the Redocal network.

The Political Process

New Caledonia is a French territory. Its population is a mix of indigenous Kanak, European and other groups. At the end of the 1990's, following a period of strong political unrest, New Caledonia entered an era defined by agreements and a referendum that led to a 30 year period of development in order to reach the large degree of autonomy the country knows today. The process ends with referendums towards either independence or the decision to remain within the French Republic. This long period has offered great opportunities and a growing will to provide populations with library services.

The development process included a focus on readjustment between the south, home of the capital city and of most economic activity, and the rest of the territory. This focus was applied to cultural development for which a special agreement was established, including a focus on Kanak heritage and language. A specific effort was thus produced to provide books and library development to the northern part of the territory and in the three Loyalty Islands. These largely Kanak populations were remote from the capital's larger libraries. The idea still existed that in a country of oral tradition, the written medium had little hope



New Caledonia, Bernheim Library Noumea.

to be take root and develop. It soon became obvious that where a library was built, people would definitely register and use their services

The first major 'readjustment'-project for the Bernheim library, in close collaboration with the Northern province, was to build a library in the north on the east coast. This library opened in 2004 and advanced the decentralization effort. A second Bernheim branch was built on the west coast and opened in 2008. Both fostered very significant progress for the creation of public libraries in the northern region. Bernheim libraries support small initiatives in remote tribal villages by providing books and training. These small libraries rely on individual involvement and tend to fluctuate, but they are a very efficient way to bring books and library services closer to the people.

The Redocal and Public Libraries Network Today

Members of the network (21 libraries) benefit from book loans and free online periodicals to supplement their collections in addition to access to the Koha library system maintained by the Bernheim library. The database counts 368,000 items, 13,000 registered users and over 150,000 loans in 2019. We witnessed over the last ten years a constant increase in visitor numbers in libraries, and we estimate that more than 10% of the total population visit libraries. Several libraries are not part of this network, including some of importance like the university of New Caledonia library or those of larger cities around Nouméa. These are public libraries providing access to collections and have registered members that are significant, though less than Redocal figures.

The services provided vary depending on the size and resources of libraries. All of them provide book collections and internet access, most of them offer online media through the Redocal network. Larger libraries hold dvd and cd collections. Most libraries have a wide range of cultural activities: regular visits by schools, storytelling, theatre shows, screenings, workshops etc. Apart from usual

library activities, libraries tend to widen their cultural approach to include traditional crafts and languages, along with many aspects of social assistance to fight illiteracy and exclusion and promote an inclusive society. The Bernheim Library hosts a monthly market that aims through conferences and workshops to promote environmental awareness and good practice. It also implements programs that will be described further in this contribution. As a service to Redocal libraries, Bernheim offers a range of cultural performances by professional companies. Only few libraries provide free registration, amongst these the three libraries run by the Bernheim Library. These three libraries do serve two thirds of registered members of the Redocal network, thus a majority of New Caledonians enjoy free library loan service.

Challenges

The historic challenges were to build libraries and convince decision makers that they are as important in Oceania as anywhere else. These challenges were met and are now behind us. The main challenge is now to maintain the network. Resources become scarce and the ever-existing fight to fund libraries is becoming harsher every year. The main objective is to be as relevant as possible to people and their needs, the key to a supportive attitude towards our services by funders.

The Covid-19 impact is deeply felt locally. Libraries had to be shut down for a whole month and the local economy was struck hard despite the fact that New Caledonia is still one of the few really Covid-free countries in the world. This new challenge worsens the financial problems but also raises questions on how to adapt our services in days of social distancing and strong sanitary measures which may just remain a permanent reality.

The Bernheim Library has started a program in collaboration with other libraries and institutions to collect stories and oral history. This program is aimed at promoting not just reading, but also creative writing and above all allowing local stories and local history to find a transmission channel. The choice was made to involve writers, young or established, of all origins. These writers are invited to remote villages to meet people, elders or youngsters, to gather their words. They then write pieces inspired by those encounters, enjoying total freedom in the form chosen: fiction, poetry, tales, plays... There is a strong focus on respect for all aspects of this work: respect of customary ways, respect of given word, respect of individuals. This is the main spring of this kind of program in an Oceanian environment and probably the main reason for its success.

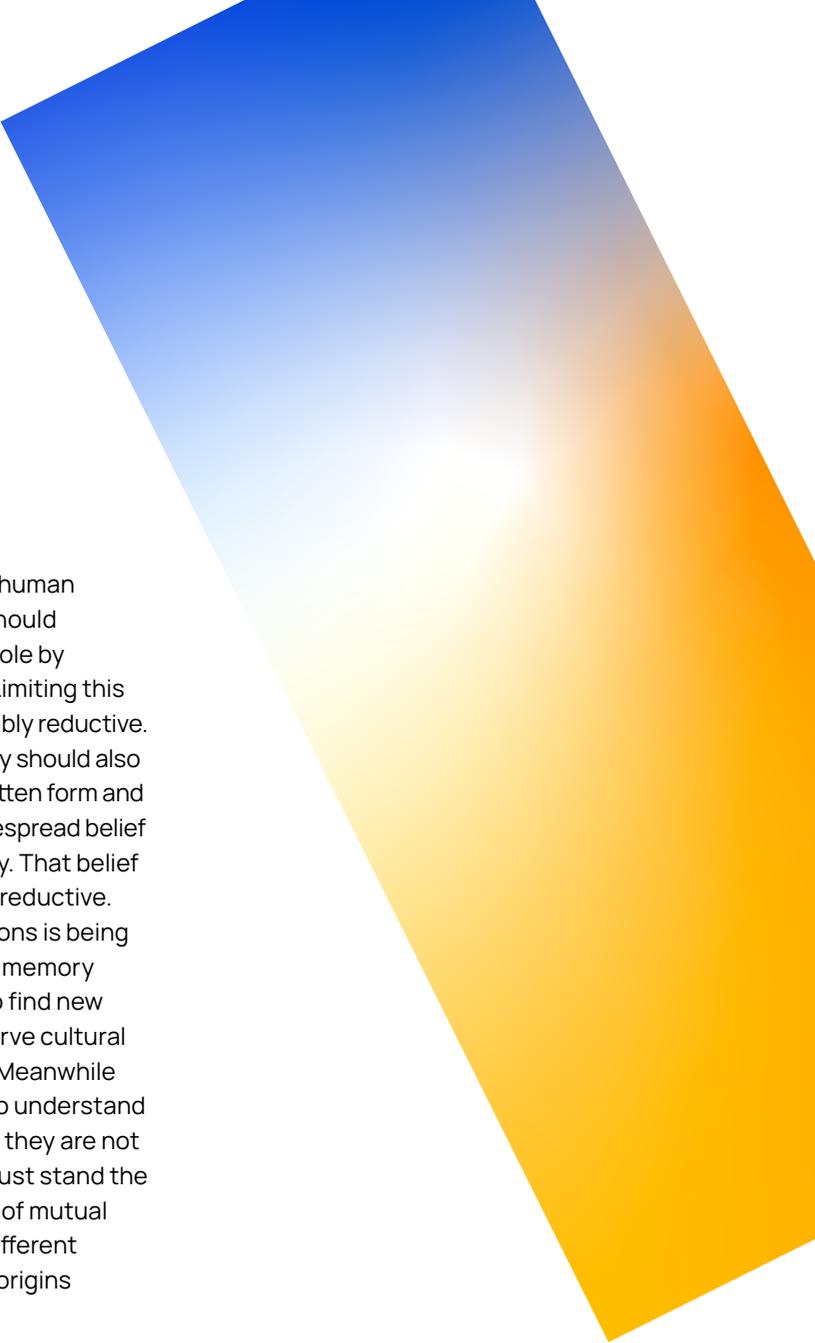


New Caledonia, Branch library, Noumea.

The outcome is a written form, published yearly and distributed free of charge to all libraries and stakeholders. The texts are then used to create theatrical performances that are programmed within the library network, thus ultimately re-transforming this unique material into an oral form. This program is rapidly growing in popularity and creates strong, highly relevant material both on shelf and in the form of live performances. It fosters deep trust and interest in libraries and promotes their use by a very wide audience.

Future Dreams

The growing number of registered and unregistered users of library services locally is a great incentive as well as a great challenge. The success of the library network of New Caledonia means responsibility to keep it alive and offers great opportunities to rethink the model. Now that people have adopted the library as self-evident, it is time for the library to mutate. Mutate as all libraries will in the next decade, but also mutate to take into account their location on the world map and think out the Oceanian library model.



Being the depositaries of human knowledge and stories, libraries should obviously play their fundamental role by encompassing the oral tradition. Limiting this action to storytelling would be terribly reductive. Just like libraries collect books, they should also collect knowledge that is not in written form and provide access to it. There is a widespread belief that oral tradition is one of secrecy. That belief is more of a representation, again reductive. Transmission to younger generations is being broken and traditions, stories and memory lost. Many elders are very eager to find new channels of transmission to preserve cultural knowledge in a very broad sense. Meanwhile younger generations find it hard to understand old precepts and beliefs: they feel they are not heard by the elders. In between must stand the library as a transgenerational tool of mutual understanding for individuals of different generations but also for different origins and cultures.

Today, a Pacific islander of any origin can slip into the skin of and culture of people from all over the world, by reading a novel or watching a documentary film in a library. Strangely enough, this same individual will struggle to find the equivalent for his own culture where it is most needed. Market forces are ruling the accessibility and viability of these forms on a global level. Can libraries counteract this? I believe they can.



About the author

Deborah Jacobs was Director of the Global Libraries Initiative at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation from 2008-2018. She started her career more than 46 years ago as a children's librarian in a rural library system. Prior to joining the foundation, Deborah served as the Seattle City Librarian for 11 years.

At the Gates foundation Deborah oversaw the work to improve the lives of one billion 'information-poor' people by 2030 while positioning the world's 320,000 public libraries as critical community assets. During the last four years of Global Libraries, Deborah and her team responded to the request of Bill and Melinda Gates to 'leave the library field strong'. They focused on building collaboration among library support organizations, deepening global connections and emphasizing programs to develop future leadership for public libraries.

In 2019 Deborah was named an Honorary IFLA Fellow, IFLA's highest honor as well as being recognized by the American Library Association with the Humphry/OCLC/Forest Press Award for significant contribution to international librarianship. She was described 'as the most influential librarian of her generation globally'.

Deborah recently retired with a focus on 'exploration and discovery' not knowing where it will take her. Looking to the future, she knows her most satisfying moments are working to engage, build and strengthen communities. She believes that through working together, anything can be achieved.

About the author

Jessica Dorr is committed to providing access to information and opportunity. She worked at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in a variety of roles all aimed at individual and community impact. With the Global Libraries initiative she supported the transformation of public libraries in the United States and internationally to better serve their users through access to information resources and the internet.

She led the foundation's Native American Access to Technology Program, which was specifically designed to meet the technology and information needs of Native communities. She also led a Partner Organizational Effectiveness pilot overseeing cross-foundation efforts related to capacity building, institution strengthening, and organizational effectiveness. Since December 2020 Jessica is the director of the Public Library of Boise, Idaho.



Global Libraries at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation – From 1997 on- and into the future by Deborah Jacobs and Jessica Dorr (USA)

When Ton van Vlimmeren asked me (Deborah Jacobs) to contribute to this book by writing a chapter focused on the work of the Global Libraries initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, there was no way I could ever say 'no'. First because Ton is a great leader and friend. Second, because I am proud of the work we did in Global Libraries. And finally, because I know Ton and many of the contributors to this project are visionary leaders with insightful and inspiring takes on the topic. I'm excited to contribute but also to read and learn.

In 2002 I met Ton as part of the Bertelsmann network when I was the City Librarian for the Seattle Public Library. The Bertelsmann network was created to encourage innovation in public libraries and spread successful solutions. It did this by building a network of international library directors who conducted research projects together. While the Bertelsmann only funded



Seattle Public Library reading room.
Photo: Ton van Vlimmeren.

the network for eight years, the impact of the connections we made has been long-lasting and life changing. I would never have had the chance to connect with library directors from the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, New Zealand, Australia and Singapore had it not been for this network. And I never would have gotten the chance to lead the Global Libraries program from 2008 to 2018 for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It was an enormous privilege



In the building of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Seattle. Photo: Ton van Vlimmeren.

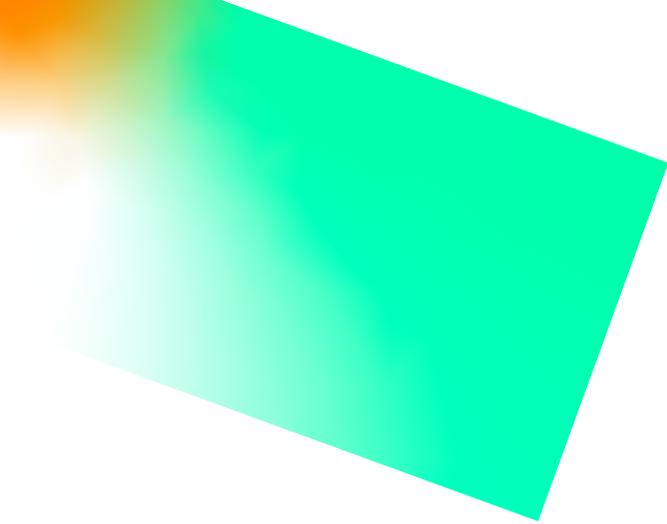
to lead a program committed to increasing access to information through public libraries all over the world and to strengthen and build networks of young and innovative library staff all over the world. And to bring to Global Libraries my learnings from the Bertelsmann network. When Ton asked me to write about the work of Global Libraries, I knew also I would need to collaborate with Jessica Dorr who had started at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 1997 and who was my colleague the years I led the program. We haven't worked together since 2018 when the Global Libraries program ended but we're part of a strong network of collaborators and supporters who are always saying 'Yes' to libraries. The following is an overview and history of Global Libraries with some thoughts from us on its long-term impact for the library field.

Summary

In the mid-1990s Bill and Melinda Gates began to consider how they could use their wealth to improve lives and reduce inequity. This led to their first major philanthropy – trying to address the problem of the growing 'digital

divide' – the difference between those who had access to information technology tools, skills and access to the internet and those who don't. The Gates family chose public libraries to invest in and to take on this effort because they recognized the role of libraries as community information providers. The stated goal for this effort was 'if you could reach the library, you could reach the internet'. This first investment in public libraries truly transformed public libraries in the US and convinced the Gates family to expand their investments in libraries globally. During the next 21 years, the Global Libraries program provided more than \$1 billion to efforts aimed at strengthening public libraries around the world. The investment by the Gates family was more than matched by local funding through new and ongoing sources for libraries. While the Gates library work ended in 2018 after reaching 280 million people, the number of people reached through improved public libraries continues to grow.

The story of Global Libraries involves more than 50 countries; thousands of library leaders and stakeholders; and strong government support at all levels. For more than



two decades, the Global Libraries initiative had the privilege of working with the public library field as a funder, thought partner, collaborator, innovator, and convener. Investments in libraries were made through four major strategies: (1) U. S. Library Program (1997 to 2004), (2) International Country Replication (2000 to 2018), (3) Impact at Scale (2011 to 2014), (4) Strong Library Field (2014 to 2018). Learnings from the first work in the U.S. Library Program were seen through to a last effort aimed at adding support for public libraries to the agenda of the African Union. While the closing of the program did leave a gap in the global philanthropic funding landscape, a more robust library field is in place to move vital work forward. This contribution will explore a brief history of this work, an overview of efforts and results, recommendations from the Global Libraries staff and a summary of what we are seeing two years after the end of the program.

U.S. Library Program

In 1997, before there was a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Gates Library Foundation was created to bring computers and digital information to public libraries in the United States. When this work began, less than a quarter of U.S. libraries were connected to the Internet and fewer provided internet access

free of cost for their users. While technology was slowly spreading to libraries, the original U.S. Library Program (USLP) was able to connect poor and rural libraries earlier and with better equipment thus ensuring equitable access for all people across the country. Today, U.S. libraries are not just connected, they've been transformed to critical community assets for today's digital world. Learning from this strategy shaped future funding efforts both within the US and globally. Key themes emerged during this first project which guided efforts over the next two decades including:

(1) Focus on impact: Basic physical access to computers and the internet is important, but access alone does not guarantee impact. Other necessary elements include training for staff and users; relevant and available content; advocacy for supportive policies and funding at local, regional, and national levels; community engagement and needs assessment; and healthy library systems and supporting institutions. The initial, singular focus on individuals and providing internet access evolved to a systems approach to change. Global Libraries' intervention points moved towards staff, systems, and library support organizations. In order to maintain focus, where Global Libraries had once focused on computer installation, the goal of positive impact on lives was used to determine priorities and drive alignment with partners.



Global Libraries' impact was greatest for the people who needed it most: people in poverty, minorities, women and girls, those most at risk of being left behind digitally and with no alternative access to the internet. Public libraries provide safe spaces for disadvantaged groups. Globally women and girls have less access to technology, but research shows they are the majority users of library computers.

(2) Capacity building to sustain impact:

While the USLP was extremely successful in bridging the digital divide and providing opportunity for millions of Americans, the sustainability of its impact was not guaranteed. USLP was implemented by foundation staff and originally did not include a focus on capacity building for those organizations, such as state libraries, library associations, and library schools, which provide long-term support and leadership for library development. GL realized that to scale and reach more countries, design and implementation would need to be done by others. Subsequently, GL worked to build the field's capacity to measure impact, train librarians to advocate for funding, and increase innovative services to meet community needs. As the foundation moved to replicate US work internationally, these components were included in new investments from the beginning.

International Country Replication

Due to the success of the US Library Program and seeing the potential reach of the world's public libraries, the foundation expanded to developing and transitioning countries. GL's next strategy focused on co-investment with countries with a significant number of public libraries currently not connected to the internet. Following a planning and piloting phase, the foundation funded national efforts aimed at equipping libraries with computer and internet access, training staff in usage and support, and conducting impact and advocacy activities.

While most public libraries are funded primarily at the local level, GL started country engagement with the leadership of national governments to build a broad umbrella of support. By targeting countries with an established library sector and governments committed to a digital agenda, GL was able to demonstrate how investments in libraries would contribute to overall development goals. Each country prioritized specific areas of focus based on its needs such as learning, economic development, health, and social inclusion. These grants were designed to fundamentally

shift the entire library infrastructure of a country and were implemented in the following countries: Botswana, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Indonesia, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Moldova, Poland, Romania, South Africa, Turkey, Ukraine, and Vietnam.

GL raised awareness about the importance of libraries in developing and transitioning countries by seeding a mind-set shift within governments, the development sector, and librarians themselves to embrace libraries, which are often under-resourced and neglected. Upgrading them to meet modern needs was sometimes as simple as improving infrastructure – adding heat to libraries in Eastern Europe, air conditioning in Africa, etc. – and increasing staff salaries and opening hours. But as government leaders saw how modest improvements in public libraries could benefit the whole community, additional resources were invested and many countries saw significant capital improvements with physically renovated or new library buildings.

To varying degrees in every GL country, the changes have become permanent due to an increase in government funding and a new role for libraries in development efforts. This has not only sustained the original grant funding; it has allowed services to grow. Highlights from these major investments include:

- **Chile:** The original investment to connect all Chilean libraries to the internet was implemented under the administration of President Ricardo Lagos (2000 to 2006) with short-term, project funding. Since that original investment three other administrations, from different political parties, have continued to fund libraries at an increased level through ongoing appropriations. The Chilean example continued to influence the work of GL as it evolved over time.
- **Lithuania:** When work in Lithuania began in 2005, only two percent of rural residents had home internet access and both librarians and library users were often accessing the internet for the first time ever through the library. The Lithuanian program, Libraries for Innovation, connected all libraries in the country, trained staff, and, more importantly, infused the library system with a spirit of innovation. Librarians began to support formal and non-formal education in new ways, host hacking sessions in the libraries, and build maker spaces to incubate local start-ups. Since the original investment, libraries in Lithuania have continued to find new ways to reach their users by using innovative library services. The mind-set shift has been permanent.



Global Libraries meeting at the Gates Foundation 2011. Photo: Ton van Vlimmeren.

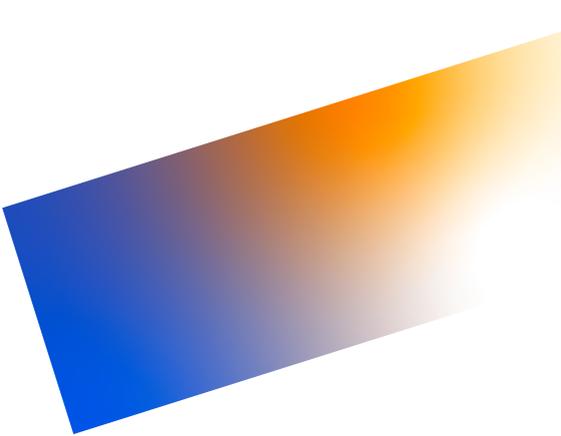
- **Colombia:** GL's work in began shortly after the election of President Juan Manuel Santos in 2010. Due to an early audience with GL leadership, he made the Colombia country work a cornerstone of his presidency. He was able to see roles for not only the Ministry of Culture but all ministries in his cabinet and made nationwide internet connectivity one of his early priorities. Most notably he made libraries a key priority in his peace agenda, saying at the launch of the program in 2015: 'The peaceful generation will be formed in these public libraries, where they will not have weapons in their hands but books and tablets, and that fills us with hope.'
- **READ Global:** While most country replication grants involved countries with a significant number of public libraries, not all countries have a well-established public library structure. In Nepal READ (Rural Education and Development)¹ focused on building community libraries in areas where government funding for libraries was lacking or nonexistent. READ libraries include a revenue generating component and often focus on gender equity by supporting women and girls. GL support to READ enabled them to deepen their impact, bring in new funders, and expand to India and Bhutan. Additionally, the community libraries in Nepal also proved essential during relief and recovery from 2015's devastating earthquakes.

Impact at Scale

While GL was able to successfully replicate at the country level, these efforts aimed at lasting, systemic change took years. In order to expand reach more rapidly, GL added a focus on engagement with field partners. By identifying and increasing the capacity of organizations that supported library development, GL was about to better connect efforts, particularly across countries. To address this, GL engaged with key strategic partners to develop and distribute proven models and tools through their networks or spheres of influence. For example, major efforts around impact assessment were designed to change the mind-set of library professionals with regards to their role in impacting lives and being able to measure these changes. The building blocks for this approach were tools and innovation, training and leadership development, and impact, policy, and advocacy.

Tools and Innovation

- **Library Edge:** The Urban Libraries Council in the US convened a roundtable of library support organizations to develop the Edge benchmarking tool.² This tool allows libraries to measure themselves against standards in technology services and programming, and then provides guidance to help libraries measure and implement improvements. Some countries outside the US have also participated.



- 1 **READ:** readglobal.org
- 2 **EDGE:** urbanlibraries.org
- 3 **IFLA Library Map of the World:** librarymap.ifla.org
- 4 **Project Outcome:** ala.org
- 5 **Design Thinking:** designthinkingforlibraries.com
- 6 **EIFL PLIP:** eifl.net

- **Library Map of the World:** The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) created the Library Map of the World to capture and display reliable library statistics and compare different library performance metrics by region.³ It also provides a platform for highlighting stories of how libraries support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. IFLA continues to build momentum around library data collection and new countries add their data to the map each year.
- **Project Outcome:** The Public Library Association of the American Library Association created Project Outcome⁴ to provide simple tools to measure the benefits libraries are providing their communities, such as programs serving childhood literacy, digital and technological training, and workforce development. This program has recently been expanded to include tools for academic libraries.

thinking to create services, programs and processes to meet changing community needs. Originally developed in English, it has been translated into fifteen languages by library associations and is still being used to train librarians globally.

- **EIFL Public Library Innovation Project:** EIFL's Public Library Innovation Project (PLIP) was funded to help build the capacity of librarians so that they can introduce technology, manage new services, build non-traditional partnerships and engage with communities in new and different ways.⁶ Through training and innovation awards, it has provided examples of how public libraries contribute in areas related to health, social inclusion, and protecting the environment. From 2014-2019 EIFL-PLIP trained 1,000 public librarians from 350 libraries in six countries in Africa in innovative libraries services. Again, this work is continuing without Gates foundation funding.

Leadership Development

- **Design Thinking for Libraries:** Recognizing the challenges facing librarians are complex and require new ways of working together and with their communities, the public libraries in Aarhus (Denmark) and Chicago (USA), created the Design Thinking for Libraries toolkit.⁵ The toolkit provides tools, examples, and a roadmap for using design

Advocacy

- **Aspen Dialogue on Public Libraries:** Starting in 2015, the Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries convened a series of multi-stakeholder forums to explore and champion new thinking on U.S. public libraries, with the goal of fostering concrete actions to support and transform public libraries for a more diverse, mobile and

- 7 **Aspen Institute:** [↗PDF Aspen Libraries Report](#)
- 8 **Public Libraries 2030:** [↗publiclibraries2030.eu](#)
- 9 **Beyond Access:** [↗irex.org](#)

connected society.⁷ National reports were supplemented by action guides to hold discussions at the state or local level. While a US focused effort, Aspen reports have been used in countries around the world.

- **Public Libraries 2020:** GL partnered with the Dutch Reading & Writing Foundation to support advocacy to include public libraries as part of the European Union 2020 agenda. PL2020 created from scratch a network of library supporters and champions in the European Union by identifying library advocates at the national level and connecting them through training and advocacy support activities. Following the end of the EU2020 agenda, the group recommitted to European advocacy as Public Libraries 2030.⁸ While created by Global Libraries, PL2030's leadership and board has found new funding to keep this effort alive.
- **By the numbers:** Global Libraries. From 1997-2018, the Global Libraries programs equipped more than 30,000 public libraries, installed more than 190,000 computers, and trained more than 136,000 library staff. This directly improved the lives of more than 280 million people.

Some of the most important partnership development work GL did were formal and informal efforts focused on bringing government, the development sector, and the library community together to highlight and promote the roles libraries play in development. In each GL country, the foundation was able to bring high-level government officials to the table and helped make these discussions productive by ensuring the library community was able to describe its value and impact in terms that resonated with government officials and development partners. The foundation also funded the creation of a global movement called 'Beyond Access' which identified and



Storytelling in neighborhood library, Santiago de Chile. Photo: Ton van Vliimmeren.

- 10 **DA2I** (Development and Access to Information; a joint project between the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the Technology & Social Change Group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington Information School: da2i.ifla.org)
- 11 **AFLIA**: web.afia.net

targeted national and regional governments which had created a digital agenda to ensure libraries were eligible for funding through these mechanisms⁹. This allowed lead government officials from more than thirty countries to meet to exchange ideas on library development.

The work to bring different stakeholders together to discuss the connection between development and information access continues. The most recent notable effort related to this was the launch in July 2017 of the 'Development and Access to Information Report'¹⁰ in conjunction with the United Nations High Level Political Forums which underlines the contribution information access, particularly through libraries, makes to promoting more socially and economically inclusive societies. A second example that continues to grow is on the African continent. Two of GL's grantees, the government of South Africa and the African Library & Institutions Association & Institution (AFLIA) led an effort to motivate governments across Africa.¹¹ In 2018, high-level government representatives from 34 countries convened in Durban and signed a declaration to invest in public libraries. A follow-up meeting in Algeria resulted in the commitment of officials to bring the declaration to the African Union, embedding support for libraries to contribute to the realization of two congruent agenda's: the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



National Library of Greece during World Library and Information Congress 2019. Photo: Ton van Vliimmeren.

GL played an important role in building the field through supporting a highly engaged leadership network to provide opportunities for training and skills development. An important investment in the field was an effort to create regional networks to identify, connect, and support future library leaders. GL supported the establishment of the International Network of Emerging Library Innovators (INELI) as a way of building human capacity in the field. We started with international cohorts and then moved to a regional approach. In total, more than 400 librarians participated in INELI by the end of 2018. A number of the regional cohorts are continuing with new funding sources,



meaning this number and the impact continues growing. Using a shared approach to innovation, these networks targeted mid-level career professionals and built cohorts of professionals ready to assume greater responsibility at the local and national level. Across the world this has happened. This group has blossomed into a global network of colleagues supporting and assisting each other and pushing each other to new levels of excellence and innovation. Participants are increasingly connected to global advocacy efforts. Due to the success of this work, IFLA is working on a plan to adapt INELI to a scalable model that can continue developing library leaders.

Strong Library Field

On May 7, 2014, the Gates foundation announced the decision to end its twenty-year Global Libraries program. The news spread rapidly across grantees and partners. Although taken by surprise, the library field responded quickly to a call to action. While there was disappointment and a sense of loss, the library field and public understood. With the news came an understanding it was time for the field to stand up and grab hold of the strategic vision of the wind-down message: Bill and Melinda Gates wanted to leave the library field strong. The work that was done from 2011-2014 to build a field-

based scaling strategy was vital to the work to exit from the library field. Because GL's strategy had been developed to scale through partners, key levers for impact had been tested, critical partners were identified, and strong networks were in place to support the field moving forward. GL was able to create a framework to guide its final investments using these assets and aimed at leaving the field strong.

An important focus became leveraging previous work and securing impact. The four-year timeframe for the wind-down helped ensure this impact. It also allowed time to utilize GL's voice and convening power to set up organizations for individual and collective success. Early in the wind-down, GL reviewed all current and in-process investments while looking for gaps. New investments were identified to support Bill and Melinda's vision that GL 'leave the library field strong.' The most critical areas identified were advancing recently launched efforts to align library user measurement to the SDGs, building a stronger network of public library leaders across Africa, and connecting regional INELIs to each other and other networks. The foundation's voice became particularly powerful; where GL had previously taken a support role in advocacy efforts, GL leaders now used the shortened timeframe to call on the library field to deepen the impact of the foundation's investment and carry work forward.

'For the second year in a row, the state budget contains \$2m to replace public library technology – especially public access. The first year was a personal legislative initiative, and this second year of funding is the Governor's action. There is a very clear and direct line between the Gates library support and these new sources of state funding.'

Lamar Veatch, Georgia State Librarian
(June 2014)

Additionally, by identifying a small number of lead organizations critical to long-term efforts, GL was able to prioritize capacity building for those organizations. Three organizations, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) the Public Library Association (PLA) of the American Library Association, and the Technology and Social Change Group (TASCHA) of the University of Washington's iSchool (the graduate program for library and information science) all received long-term funding to work individually and collectively to lead efforts forward.

Reflections on the Future of Libraries

As part of winding-down the Global Libraries initiative, we spent some time thinking about what we've learned in our two decades of engagement with and investment in public libraries. The following are what needs and opportunities we believe public libraries must accomplish in order to be embraced – and funded – as the critical community assets they are. These recommendations are:

- 1. Use collaboration to make progress**
- 2. Identify and support new leaders to make change**
- 3. Capture and share proof of impact**
- 4. Show clear alignment with community needs to gain support**
- 5. Build partnerships at all levels**

Additional detail about these recommendations can be found on the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation website.¹²

Now, almost two years after the closing on the Global Libraries program, we've had a chance to reflect on the results of the significant investments in public libraries and the infrastructure that supports them. It has

also been a time of considerable change and disruption on a global scale due to changing economic, health, and cultural contexts. In many ways, public libraries face some of the same challenges as when the Gates family first started to invest in libraries. If anything, digital skills and information are even more critical to individual and community development. The digital divide remains in the US and globally. Public libraries are grappling with a global pandemic and struggling to provide services in light of new social distancing requirements. Public libraries remain overlooked and underfunded.

That said, we are incredibly optimistic about the impact public libraries are having in their communities right now. We are not surprised libraries are rising to the challenges of a global pandemic, deepened inequity, polarization, and ongoing campaigns of disinformation. Public libraries are making real and substantive impact in their communities because they have decades of experience continually adjusting to meet user needs and they have embraced combining physical and virtual services for their users. When a global pandemic restricted in-person engagement, libraries shifted seamlessly from providing physical books and study spaces to a more concentrated focus on online and in-person.

While Global Libraries seeded some of these efforts, they have continued to grow and expand beyond our involvement. These are also very linked and connected concepts; great librarians and great organizations are weaving each of these into their work as a cohesive whole. They continue to inspire us in their creativity, commitment, and effectiveness. We believe stronger, better connected librarians are the true legacy of Global Libraries.

'We have created unbreakable links on the continent, such that if we want something/ information on any African country, colleagues are just a WhatsApp call/text away. Thanks to Technology. Even if I don't have a number for someone, I know I can call on Kalaba, Allan or Vel, they will lead me to the right person, either from INELI, AfLAC, IYALI etc. Right now, we have many opportunities to coordinate online webinars and some of our colleagues are already engaging and making presentations together.'

Mwanza Aggie Kaite-Mumbi,
Secretary General of the
National Zambian Library Association
African Trailblazer

We are truly inspired how a connected network of librarians and library supporters are trading ideas and suggestions. They are working on issues together and supporting each other to find solutions that work for all. While we knew from grantee feedback the importance of our convening power, the connections we helped to foster continue without our involvement. For us, what is most encouraging is seeing how much librarians are supporting each other across geographies. The world is a small place and right now many factions are sowing division and building walls. We are proud of how committed librarians are to reaching across, finding common ground, and working collaboratively. They will change the world.



Computerroom in Central Library Capetown.
Photo: Ton van Vlimmeren.

About the author

Nina Nannini has been the CEO of NBD Biblion since 2018. Being an enthusiastic and creative transition manager, she is responsible for the transformation of NBD Biblion into a more digital and customer-oriented organization. Being educated as a historian, she started her career as a market researcher conducting media and communication surveys. Pursuing her love of books, in 2001 she started to work for the international publishing company Reed Business Information. After working as a publisher, she developed her management skills at various publishing companies, including SDU Publishers. In 2016 she joined NBD Biblion, which was just recovering from a large reorganization. She is driven by the energy and pride that colleagues take in the work they do, and also by the potential of NBD Biblion to have a positive impact on reading and inspiring libraries to think of new ways to reach out to clients.



NBD Biblion

– Five Decades of Supporting Libraries

by Nina Nannini (the Netherlands)

NBD Biblion, formerly known as the Dutch Library Service, is a service organization for libraries in the Netherlands. NBD Biblion has played an important role in the modernization of libraries in the Netherlands for the last 50 years. It was founded by the library industry itself and has evolved from a book supplier to an independent, full-fledged service and business partner for many parties in the library and book industry.

NBD Biblion is a non-profit company that aims to optimize the supply chain of media, mostly books, to libraries. It selects, reviews, and describes new book titles, negotiates a good discount with the publishers and arranges the delivery of more than two million copies annually to Dutch public libraries and school media libraries. It is known for the typical hardcover plasticized Dutch library books.

In addition, NBD Biblion works together with libraries to support and promote (pleasure in) reading and developing digital and data services supporting libraries to be ready for the future.

Every year, NBD Biblion provides 700 of the Dutch libraries and 3000 school libraries with two million books. On a weekly basis NBD Biblion makes 40,000 books shelf ready. This does not only mean binding and laminating a book, providing RFID chips, barcodes and

thematic stickers but also ensuring that it ends up in the catalog and can be directly placed and found on the bookshelves. In most other countries, libraries still must do all of this themselves. It saves a lot of time and work when this can be done centrally, and it certainly benefits the library's quality. It has undoubtedly contributed to the Dutch public libraries internationally being seen as pioneers.

Origin

Inspired by Scandinavian countries that organized these services on a national level, a Dutch Committee issued a report entitled 'Central purchase, binding, cataloging and preparation for public libraries' in the first quarter of 1970, which included evidence from working visits to Scandinavia. The report was adopted by the National Library Association and as a result, on November 9, 1970, the Dutch Library Service (NBD) was established.

Many aspects from Scandinavia were copied, but there were also clear differences. For example, to emphasize its not-for-profit character, the legal form of a 'foundation' was chosen. This was, and still is, an absolute precondition for libraries, for purchasing services from such a noncommercial organization.



NBD Biblion. Photo: Ben Aarts.

A second difference with the situation in Northern Europe was that the offering process of available titles and sales remained strictly separated, again an important requirement for the libraries who cherish their independence. The weekly offer with reviews then became the responsibility of the National Library Association, while the preparation of books and sales activities were placed with the NBD Foundation.

The big change however was that almost all public libraries in the country started to buy their books through NBD. They benefitted from the efficiency of such a large scale and – due to an exception in the law on the fixed prices for books (to protect the book trade) – from reasonable prices.

To compensate the local booksellers for this these received for a period of more than 20 years a percentage of the turnover of the

local library at NBD. Also, the booksellers and publishers were granted seats in the governing board of NBD next to the representatives of the libraries. Finally, the libraries, NBD and the publishers and booksellers joined their (financial) efforts to promote reading in the country. These measures helped to ease the pain for the booksellers.

Times of Growth

Between 1975 and 1987 a Library Act standardized funding of libraries based on the number of the population. This resulted in a growth in the number of library locations and a substantial growth in collection-budget. This greatly stimulated the purchase of books, and NBD also saw the number of sold books increase considerably.

With the increasing size of the organization, NBD decided to develop and



maintain the entire automation system in-house. The first IT employee was recruited in June 1976, followed by an operator later that year. The first computer, a Philips P455, was installed. Orders were processed at the NBD where they were recorded on punch cards. The transportation of the order forms and punch cards was time consuming, so in 1977 it was decided to also take that activity in own hand: Three punch typists were recruited to process approximately 40,000 orders per week. Bookkeeping was also replaced by software that was developed in-house. Doing the automation entirely in-house, allowed for an increase in services for libraries.

In the year 1976, NBD produced 'only' two million books, but by 1979 that number had already risen to just above three million. The peak year was 1981 when no less than 3.2 million books were sold. This rapid growth meant that the capacity of the bindery had to be expanded. A showroom was set up in The Hague, where one of all the titles in stock was displayed. This showroom attracted librarians from throughout the Netherlands to supplement their collections or, in some cases, even compiled the collection for entire branches. Stock lists were sent monthly to the libraries upon request. In October 1982, NBD, thus far located at three different locations in The Hague, moved to one large location in Leidschendam. In 1984-1985 the product range was expanded

with video, sheet music, CDs, and other audiovisual media. In 1992 NBD introduced the first electronic ordering system, known as AIDA. It was welcomed by libraries, as it also provided electronic information about the media-supply and allowed for exchanging data between local library-systems and AIDA. In 1994 more than 30% of the orders came in electronically.

Developing Machines

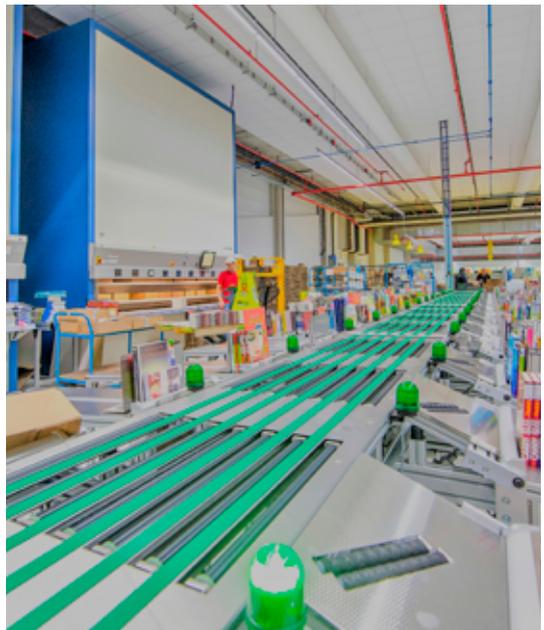
In 1991 NBD bought its first plasticization machines, enabling part of the work to be done mechanically instead of manually. When the machine building factory that delivered the machines to NBD went bankrupt in 1998, their staff was hired, and NBD started to develop their own machines with specific library-features. In 1999 the first machine was sold to DBC in Denmark. In 2005 more machines were delivered to other companies in the graphics industry. Over the past two decades, this activity has developed into a professional engineering branch of NBD Biblion, now known as NBD Biblion Technology Group. It is responsible for the development and maintenance of the NBD Biblion machine park in Zoetermeer and develops, builds, and maintains machines for clients in the book and graphics industries in the Netherlands and around the world. The team is specialized in the design

and construction of special machines for libraries, bookbinding, and printing companies. Compared to other machine builders it is a small team. But with a software engineer, a mechanical engineer, maintenance technicians, all-round technicians, and machine builders in the team, it can invent and make everything. The engineers continuously come up with solutions for customers: they are in fact one big breeding ground for innovation. One of these innovations was a sorting device of which a prototype was installed at Amsterdam public library.

Technology Takes a Lead

An important merger with Biblion B.V took place in 2003 and the NBD foundation continued its services for libraries as NBD Biblion B.V. Biblion was formerly rooted in the NBLC: the Dutch library and reading center, a predecessor of the Dutch Library Association, nowadays known as the VOB. The unit that produced descriptions and reviews of new titles and offered these as a purchase advise to the libraries was bought from the association by a commercial party. When it came back on the market again it was bought and merged with NBD.

From then onwards, NBD Biblion did not only sell shelf-ready books, but also offered



Production area. Photo: Ben Aarts.

content databases and digital title descriptions. With the introduction of the National Database Purchasing Committee in 2003, this meant a substantial increase to NBD Biblion's turnover. For the libraries NBD Biblion became even more the one stop shop for everything concerning acquisition and collection.

In 2003, NBD Biblion B.V. formulated its mission, ambitions, and objectives in the first long-term policy plan for 2004-2006. That plan focused on innovation, market expansion, cost reduction and improved services. For example, in the context of improved services, the report 'Faster and Better' published in March 2004, recommended improvement of delivery times. The implementation of those proposals shortened the average delivery times by two to three weeks.

In the field of innovation, reference can be made to the RFID labels with which all books for Dutch libraries were equipped – starting



Production area at NBD Biblion. Photo: Jimke Joling.

for free in April 2004 using a standardized dataset. The application of this technology was groundbreaking and trendsetting for other countries. Due to this new technology books arriving to the libraries are fully described and contain all necessary metadata which enables librarians to put the books directly on the right shelf. In interlibrary loans and the process of borrowing and returning in neighboring libraries the standardized dataset enabled the reading of the RFID chips in every library in the country. NBD Biblion itself uses the chips for the logistic process in the house.

As a spin-off from this, the development of label pasting machines should not go unmentioned, as well as the prominent role that NBD Biblion has started to play in the field of purchasing and selling RFID labels to libraries in the Netherlands and abroad. Other innovations were the 'Book salon', a touch screen showing book covers that allowed patrons to go directly to the

information and copies available. Also, an eBook platform was developed that served until other developments took over.

'Standing order' was introduced, meaning that based on the purchase history of a library NBD Biblion will prepare and deliver copies of titles the library is going to buy anyway. And these actions are automatically transferred to the library catalogue and financial administration. A step further was the creation of a service offering acquisition of collection, based on history, profile of that specific library and the available budget. Thus, releasing the library of this complicated task. All this was available to all the libraries in the whole country.

For the period 2007 to 2009 the main focus points for this period were: quality improvement, better communication with libraries, process-based work and approaching new target groups.



Books, ready for distribution. Photo: Jimke Joling.

New Legislation

After this, a period of decline began, libraries had to cut on their collection budgets because of the financial crisis producing less and had other demands.

In January 2015, a new library law was adopted in the Netherlands: the start of a new period. The library law aimed to update legal provisions regarding public libraries and to develop the national digital public library. It defined the scope of the digital library and arranged its structural funding through the national government. This law stipulates that every Dutch person must have access to a public library, in both physical and digital form. It also defines the functions and conditions that a public library must meet. The responsibility for the national digital library rests at the Royal Library. In addition to this task, the Royal Library is a guardian and responsible for the monitoring

of public libraries and responsible for the facilities for people with reading disabilities. The law can be read as a policy document and leaves a lot of space for local interpretation and customization in locally funded libraries, and also space that suits the decentralized character of the system that the national government must leave for local government.

According to this law, all libraries must be relevant to citizens in a reliable, independent, authentic, and accessible way. The law defines the following five tasks and roles for public libraries:

- 1. making knowledge and information available;**
- 2. offering opportunities for development and education;**
- 3. promoting reading and introduction to literature;**
- 4. organizing meetings and debates;**
- 5. getting acquainted with art and culture.**

Some of these tasks were new to libraries and had to be realized by the same workforce and within the same budget. As a result, the demand for better, faster, and preferably cheaper services grew. NBD Biblion redefined their services and as small competitors entered the market, and it was necessary to have a serious dialogue about the library services. As a result of this,

a vast improvement program was defined. Challenges for libraries have changed. Less people found their way to the libraries, less copies were borrowed and budgets were cut. The discussion on what a future library book collection should look like was increasingly dominated by change and disruption in reading and study behavior.

The upside of the new tasks was that more young people found their way to the library and more study space was needed. On the downside: people coming to the library for studying or debate did not necessarily mean more books to be lend out. So, NBD Biblion redefined its existence in dialogue with the libraries. This meant redefining the services and optimizing the existing services. Data on this changing library usage was necessary and had to be researched to develop the right products for libraries. Since 2017 several change programs have been implemented at NBD Biblion. Production times have been reduced from weeks to a few days. For NBD Biblion, this optimization of existing services is important, but it is not enough if the goal is to service libraries complete and properly, to really help them to become future proof.

Artificial Intelligence, Data Usage and Technological Improvement

In 2019 NBD Biblion opted for another governance change, with NBD Biblion B.V. continueing as NBD Biblion Foundation (as the services and products for libraries are not for profit, and the foundation structure suits this better than the private limited company (B.V.) that NBD Biblion was since 2003).

In addition to the foundation, two commercially operating companies were set up, intended for machine construction and printing and binding activities for customers other than libraries. Together these are known as NBD Biblion Group.

The connection with the library field in the governance structure is still there and to continue the dialogue on services two advisory groups were installed: one at a strategic level and one on desired products and services level.



Preparing shelf ready books. Photo: NBD Biblion.

NBD Biblion has been developing for half a century and continues to learn. Development is the engine of progress, and an opportunity for libraries and NBD Biblion. That is why NBD Biblion increasingly invests in technology, digitization, and data. This allows making services increasingly efficient and offer deliveries faster and cheaper. The technology creates the opportunity to offer more and more customized solutions.

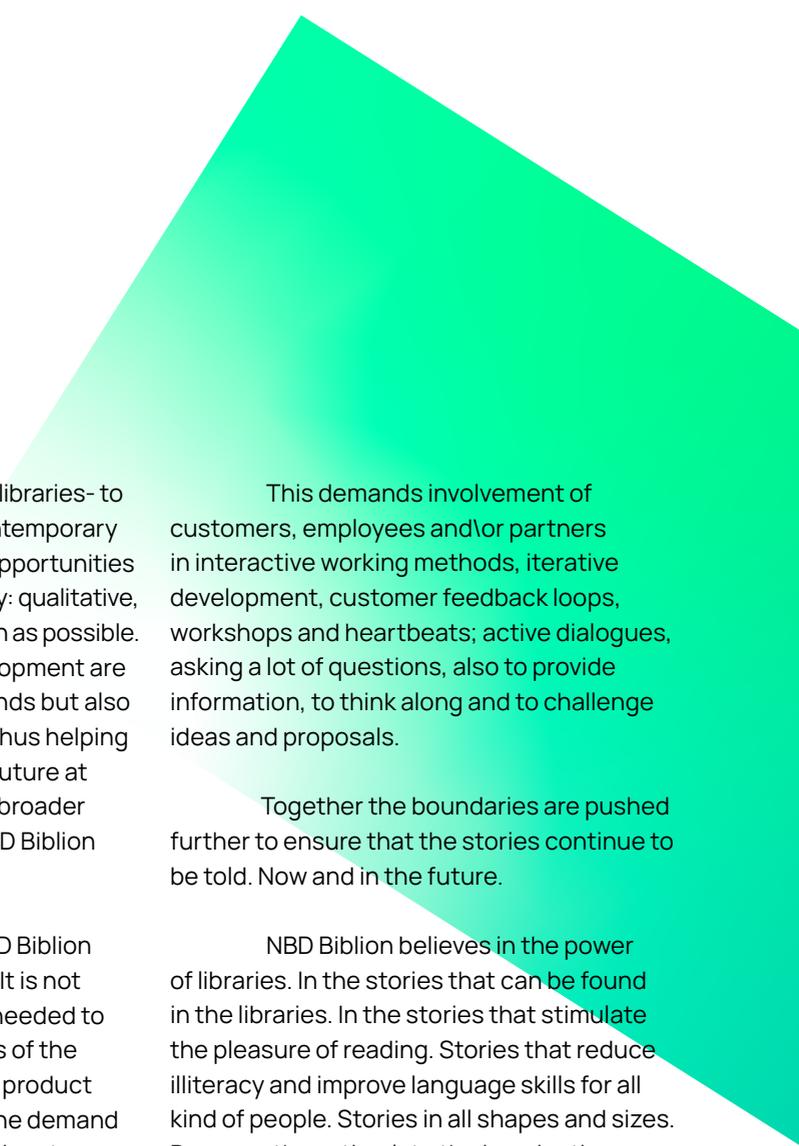
In the last two years NBD Biblion has been working on a project to generate automated bibliographic metadata. While bibliographers do their work manually, in the meantime computers read the book with artificial intelligence and text mining, and evaluation shows the same quality results can be extracted. This project is concluding and as a result the data will be produced one month before the books are being published, using a digital review copy. Within 24 hours all standardized MARC data for title description can be generated and completed with a summary and book review. In comparison: this process

takes now up to 60 days, done manually using the printed book copy and is more expensive

It is an example of how metadata and new technology are used to serve libraries better, quicker and at lower costs.

With these data, new models are being developed adding local data, programs, and current events to collection data. This will help libraries to think about themes, specific target groups, current events, and social relevance. It is the goal to serve libraries with this marketing approach, so they can deliver adjusted services based on their customer demands. Now more than ever it is necessary to keep pace with developments. With increasing online services and decreasing contact between readers and librarians. NBD Biblion seeks to combine the knowledge of the librarian with new technology and to preserve and develop this knowledge.

NBD Biblion consider this as a priority task and values these kinds of developments as opportunities in which it takes increasingly the



lead. To enable the customers – the libraries- to offer their range of products in a contemporary manner NBD Biblion translates the opportunities into new forms of support and supply: qualitative, innovative and ready-to-use as much as possible. Pilot projects for this product development are not only conducted in the Netherlands but also in Belgium, Norway, and Germany. Thus helping the libraries to stay relevant in the future at affordable prices in an increasingly broader social and cultural role. This way NBD Biblion itself remains relevant as well.

At some point in history NBD Biblion was at risk becoming a monopolist. It is not without reason that a change was needed to work more and more from the needs of the customers. Where it used to be the product being the center of work, now it is the demand of the libraries and behind them their patrons and users. NBD Biblion wants to be transparent about the plans, developments and ideas and the way it is working on solutions to strengthen the position of the libraries.

The customer is put first in all actions and services are designed around them. To test needs and relevance a lot of attention and effort is paid to peer groups and customer panels. NBD Biblion wants to know where challenges lie for the partners and customers so that tailor-made solutions are possible and new opportunities can be anticipated.

This demands involvement of customers, employees and/or partners in interactive working methods, iterative development, customer feedback loops, workshops and heartbeats; active dialogues, asking a lot of questions, also to provide information, to think along and to challenge ideas and proposals.

Together the boundaries are pushed further to ensure that the stories continue to be told. Now and in the future.

NBD Biblion believes in the power of libraries. In the stories that can be found in the libraries. In the stories that stimulate the pleasure of reading. Stories that reduce illiteracy and improve language skills for all kind of people. Stories in all shapes and sizes. Because they stimulate the imagination, help people to understand the world better and increase knowledge. It is a great passion to support and relieve libraries as much as possible. Also, within the rapidly changing digital society. So, NBD Biblion continues to develop together with libraries: from ready-to-read books, DVDs and games to databases, serious gaming, 21st century skills, data-driven collections, and sustainable solutions.

About the author

Hannelore Vogt is the director of the Cologne Public Library. Under her leadership, the Cologne Public Library was named the national Library of the Year in 2015, as was the Würzburg Public Library, of which she was previously director. In 2016 she was honored by the Cologne Cultural Department as 'Cultural Manager of the Year' and in 2019 she was awarded the Karl-Preusker-Medal by Library and Information in Germany – Federal Union of German Library Associations (BID) for her 'innovative thinking and action'. The medal is awarded to those who have distinguished themselves in their support and advancement of the cultural and educational mandates of librarianship. Hannelore has a degree in Library Science, a Master's Degree in Cultural Management and Doctorate in Marketing.

In addition to serving on the board of the Goethe Institute's 'Information & Library' division, she was a strategic advisor for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and a member in two IFLA Standing Committees (PL and Metropolitan Libraries). She is an international speaker on topics of library marketing, customer orientation, innovation management and personnel development.



Scenarios for the Library of the Future – Best Practice Examples from Cologne

by Hanne Vogt (Germany)

The Social and Societal Role of the Library

Viewed by its visitors as patron-oriented, reliable, pluralistic and intercultural, the Cologne Public Library is the most visited cultural and educational institution in the city. Just like other large and growing metropolitan areas, Cologne increasingly needs places that create identity and are personally relevant to its citizens. Cultural district development is a growing factor in the social cohesion in a city with many immigrants. The role of libraries in our cities is not just limited to lending books; libraries are above all about social exchange and equal opportunities. In 'Palaces for the People' the American sociologist Eric Klinenberg addresses this aspect. "He very clearly demonstrates that libraries are not only educational and cultural institutions, but also vital parts of a city's social infrastructure. The renowned American library scientist David Lankes expresses a similar

view: 'Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, and great libraries build communities' (Lankes 2012).

Intercultural, diversity-based and multilingual services are becoming more important in an increasingly globalized society. Founded in 1890 to contribute to 'solving the social question' the Cologne Public Library still does so today. It offers programs such as 'We Speak Many Languages' and provides low-threshold services such as the Minibibs: library kiosks in social hotspots and shopping centers. It offers literacy services and runs the 'Sprachraum': the language space for immigrants that is staffed by approximately 140 volunteers. In addition, the Cologne Public Library provides digital and analog services to help senior citizens combat loneliness.

The increasingly individualistic society needs non-commercial, public places pulsing with life that allow people to tarry and spend time. The neighborhood branch libraries, in particular, fulfill various functions. They are not only places where knowledge and key



Kalk Library. Photo: Heyda.

qualifications are imparted, but also essential forums for community engagement. In this context, the design thinking method ensures the participation of relevant groups and is at the same time a creative method for the development of targeted solutions.¹ The Library used this method in Kalk, a somewhat disadvantaged neighborhood, in order to develop a new concept for the neighborhood's branch library. In workshops led by the Dutch creative guide Aat Vos, the neighborhood residents, along with library teams from all departments and staff levels, designed their dream location.² The design process also benefited from a cooperation with the local art scene. A particularly innovative element was the giant digital presentation screen designed by the artist group Urban Screen. Created specifically for the Kalk Library, the screen is geared towards the branch's young adult target audience. The screen allows the teens to interactively develop and animate creative content. Creative potential is encouraged and challenged. People cannot

only experience public art, but also design and create it. The development of such places is not only timely and geared to local needs and requirements, but also sends a signal of appreciation to the residents.

The Library has long been proactively responding with appropriate services to increasing digitization. Due to digitization's growing importance in society, a link is necessary between the digital and analog worlds.³ The public library assumes this role as a mediator of (digital) education and culture. The Library's services and programs are anchored in the context of socially relevant topics and technology. Eco-culture is currently an area that motivates and interests many people: How can we deal with our environment in a sustainable way? How do natural processes function in our technological society? There is also the very practical question: 'How do I behave as part of society in order to live a sustainable and environmentally conscious life?' Some practical examples include workshops,

- 1 designthinkingforlibraries.com
- 2 **Koln Kalk library** aatvos.com

discussion groups, and urban gardening projects with schoolchildren or 'Floating Green'; pop-up spaces for sustainable living.

The rapid response to pressing current social issues, such as the integration of immigrants, media competence or data security, belong to the basic principles of a deeply democratic institution such as a library. More and more young people are visiting libraries, as is the case in Cologne, where 20-30 year-olds are the most frequent visitors. At the opening of the Central Library in 1979, Cologne native and Nobel laureate Heinrich Böll stated: 'Reading citizens are not the most obedient.' Especially now, when young people are demonstrating for their future, when fake news and dubious news reports lead to confusion, libraries can take on a pioneering role. They are places to initiate civic conversation and democratic debate, they give workshops and guidance how to debunk fake news.

Be a Maker, not a Taker

Digitization is irreversibly on the rise, and there is often talk of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. During the corona crisis, this was and is particularly evident. During the crisis, many libraries were able to find ways to offer services. Completely new and fascinating

program formats emerged. The crisis thus became an impetus for innovation. Many areas of society are in a state of upheaval. This applies to libraries as well. On the façade of the Academy of Fine Arts in Rotterdam, neon letters spell out the words of Willem de Kooning: 'I have to change to stay the same.' This applies very well to the current situation facing libraries and other institutions, organizations and sectors worldwide that must realign themselves without sacrificing their principles and social missions. The classic task of libraries is to impart education and knowledge; nothing has changed in this respect. However, they have the challenge how they fulfill this mission under changed conditions. It is not only a matter of adapting the existing range of services, but also of a visionary rethinking of library work.

One of the keys to responsible participation in society is the competent and above all critical handling of new technology and social networks. Therefore, education in the 21st century is no longer possible without digital education. How can libraries design and teach digitization? In order to do so it is necessary to focus primarily on people and their needs. Whether digital transformation, climate change, or the energy revolution, a knowledge of mathematics, information technology and the natural sciences (STEM) is central to a responsible and active participation in and co-creation of the future. The critical

- 3 stbib-koeln.de/digital
- 4 Keese 2016, p.303
- 5 Gehlen 2017

shortage of STEM experts predicted for many western nations in the coming years is a real concern. Mathematics, computer science, natural sciences and technology are essential cultural techniques. They will become 'location factors of increased value' in the future.⁴ By offering appropriate services, libraries can set targets and interest young people in STEM at an early age, in addition to offering the regular and necessary literacy and bibliographic instruction services. Libraries thus ensure that children receive a non-commercial view of digital offerings and services. Critical journalists

posit that Germany has missed the boat when it comes to digitization. 'Therefore, we need a fearless approach to future technology, not only in schools. We need a second education system that also trains adults'⁵. Dirk von Gehlen speaks of a 'new generational contract of learning.' Libraries should be intermediaries in this movement. In order to do this, the Cologne Public Library has held the STEM festival called MINT Köln since 2018. The festival introduces children and young adults to STEM topics in a low-threshold manner.



Kalk Library. Photo: Heyda.

- 6 Many helpful suggestions for discussion and reflection on the role of libraries are also provided by the model '**The four spaces – A new model for the public library**' by Henrik Jochumsen, Dorte Skot-Hansen and Casper Hvenegaard Rasmussen. [➤ PDF A new model for the public library](#)

Libraries today are places of 'knowledge you can touch' and vibrant experiential spaces. They are not reading rooms, but spaces of participatory interaction that invite people to do not only their own thing. Libraries can deliberately expand the concept of learning beyond book learning by combining progress and participation. Learning by doing, trying things out under the motto 'Tinker and Try' and citizen participation play an important role. This allows many people to participate actively and share their ideas instead of just being passive recipients.

Libraries are Third Places

In times of widespread digital communication and networking, there is an increased need for places of active engagement and direct communication between people. Libraries are becoming the so-called 'third place', alongside the home and workplace. People feel welcome and enjoy spending time in this non-commercial space. The library's role is changing. In urban society, it is becoming part of people's extended living environment. People of all ages, social classes and ethnicities use the library equally. A participatory process is changing and developing the library. It is an essential hub for information, inspiration, innovation,

integration, interaction and knowledge transfer.⁶ Shortly after the lockdown in 2020, during the corona crisis, it became clear that people needed not only digital spaces but also the equally important physical place. Libraries in Germany, for example, have been among the first institutions that were allowed to reopen after the lockdown, subject of course to hygiene regulations.

In his book 'The Great Good Place', published in 1989, Ray Oldenburg pointed out the importance of 'third places'. Third places are venues other than the workplace and



Central Library. Photo: Neumann.

home that are important to a city's residents (Oldenburg 1989). Libraries, cultural centers, theaters, museums, a favorite café, or an attractive square in the city center become important places in which to spend time. In libraries, one can discover the unexpected, be creative, acquire new knowledge and share this knowledge with others. The attractiveness of libraries as a 'third place' with their space and collections, depends not only on their resources and services, but also on their availability. If possible, libraries should be open daily. For some time now, the Cologne Public Library has been open on Sundays. The open library model, with service hours outside of regular opening hours, is necessary and is highly utilized in Cologne and other cities. Without citizen participation, libraries cannot function as third places, which is why citizen participation is vital in this process.

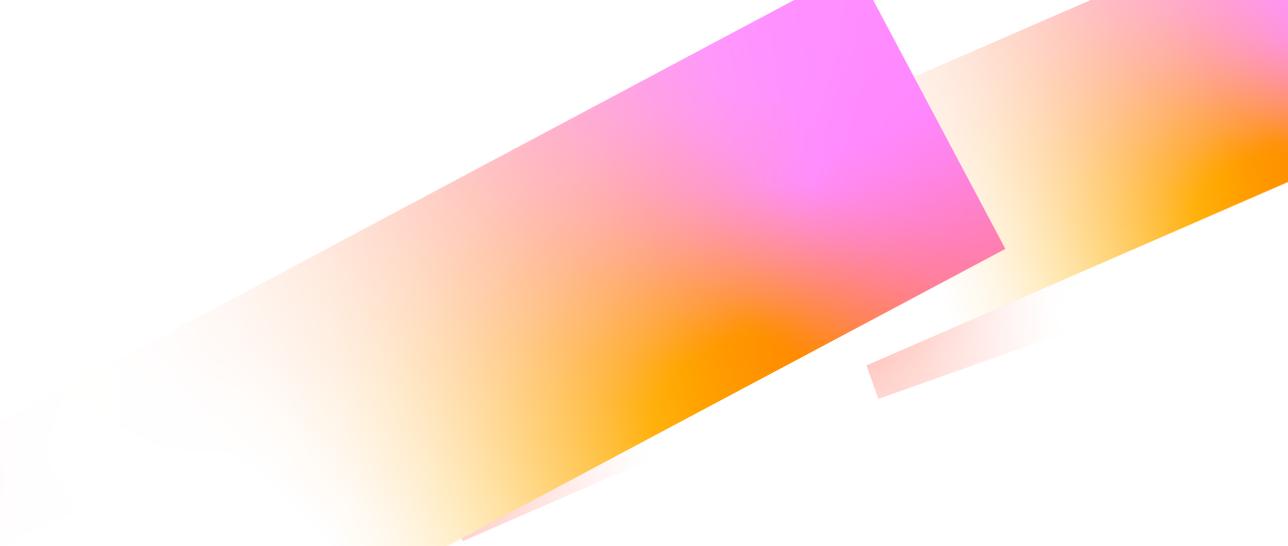
Social-Cultural Education and Knowledge Management

Learning, especially lifelong learning, no longer occurs only at traditional educational institutions. For example, the Cologne Public Library uses the concept of Peer 2 Peer

University (P2PU) to organize small study groups, called learning circles, which do online courses together.⁷ Most learning circles use free online courses, educational programs, or other resources available online, although P2PU and other contributors do create some course content. The P2PU website offers extensive materials and practical tips for libraries. Along with other libraries and NGOs, the Cologne Public Library is participating in an EU project, Learning Circles in Libraries (LCIL) that runs until 2021. The goal of the project is to adapt the P2PU model to Europe and provide training for European librarians. By working in partnership with P2PU, libraries are able to offer low-threshold access to digital education for adult learners and also to reach out to educationally disadvantaged groups.

Beyond its local programs and services, the Cologne Public Library is part of a local and international professional network. These partners cooperate with the Library and provide creative input for new project initiatives. Stakeholders come from the art and creative scenes, from companies and foundations and from German and international research institutions. To think outside the box and to look not only to other countries, but also to other industries, is a cornerstone of innovation. Networking in all directions will be essential for a future society in which knowledge expands exponentially.





All Library services and programs are accompanied by a high quality, professionally selected, current collection, available in both analog and digital formats. In order to develop customer-oriented programs and services, the Library continuously investigates new areas of knowledge, observes the technical and media environment very closely, and checks trend reports from the social and digital areas on an ongoing basis. It acts proactively to introduce new technology and invites citizens of all ages to participate actively in its makerspaces, MINTspace, Minibibs and the like. In these spaces, the Library offers access to future-oriented technological trends, such as 3D printing, virtual reality, robotics and serious games. Patrons can try out and borrow more than 100 different technical devices and musical instruments from the 'Library of Things'. The school services department and the Makerteam also offer a comprehensive cadre of educational and entertaining programs and events, such as scavenger hunts, along with accompanying collection materials.

Of prime importance for the successful cohesion of our societies is the ability to check facts based on primary sources. Public libraries must, as part of their core mission as information providers, be at the forefront of the fight against fake news. Therefore, the Cologne Public Library engages in promoting information and knowledge literacy. To this end it works with media partners.

Libraries as Local Partners of the Media

Ismene Poulakos describes librarians as true all-rounders: 'They program robots, carry out experiments, advise job-seekers, spend time sewing with their patrons and digitize records. In Weare, New Hampshire, local library director Mike Sullivan even became the founder and editor-in-chief of a newspaper. Sullivan launched the weekly newspaper 'Weare in the World' after the last local newspaper in the community folded; just one of many unfortunate examples of the newspaper crisis in the USA. Sullivan defined himself less as a journalist than as an information gatherer. He was very familiar with newsletters, social media and the library's website. Therefore, it was just a small step to bring a newspaper to life and so fill an important information gap in the community. This was a brave, but not delusional step for a library director. He did not aspire to research grievances or comment on politics. His primary concern was making important parts of community life accessible, passing on information and enabling communication between citizens. Such a goal perfectly aligns with the aspirations of modern libraries and espouses a value that is more important than ever in a globalized world: local identity.'



The local press has precisely this desire to communicate and can therefore enter into very fruitful partnerships with local libraries. Although there are still, as in Germany, local newspapers that function nationwide, the press crisis necessitates forging new alliances and seeking close contact to potential readers. A major advantage of libraries is their stellar reputation. Unlike other institutions, associations or companies, they enjoy an excellent reputation and stand for values such as independence, diligence and reliability. Despite increasing digitization, libraries are highly vibrant third-party places, where not only Facebook, but also real face-to-face encounters take place. With the assistance of trained staff, digitization in the real world is made tangible and understandable. Libraries combine information and entertainment with sensory experiences and social exchanges beyond social (media) bubbles. This has always produced extensive contact across all social strata, age groups and cultures. To newspaper editorial offices this connection and resource is increasingly lost due to a shortage of resources.

Other aspects link journalism and libraries as well and create classic win-win situations for both. Libraries benefit from current reporting methods, correspondent networks and reporters “on the street”. While librarians primarily research existing databases, journalists see themselves as creative

information researchers who tap into a wide variety of sources quickly and effectively. For libraries, the propensity for order and the ability to classify is helpful when it comes to offering patrons orientation in an increasingly complex world by pre-selecting the right materials according to their needs.

Journalists, in turn, benefit from a library resource that in current times has become more valuable than ever: trust! Regardless of whether one believes that the media brought the current erosion of trust upon itself, or whether the press is simply the victim of social development, there is a huge loss of appreciation for journalistic work and a large amount of mistrust; and not only by those leaning to the far-right. Here is where libraries can, in close cooperation, provide effective clarification and education, as well as support the important work of reputable media. The Cologne Public Library, for example, does this with a large-scale workshop series for children and young adults on identifying fake news. In workshops held throughout the year, young people learn how to recognize, expose and deal with fake news and manipulated images.

One workshop highlight was a collaboration with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, one of the largest and most renowned daily newspapers in Germany, and the broadcast station research cooperative. At the kick-off

- 8 **Core Values of Librarianship** [↗ala.org](#)
9 **Top 10 Technology Trends by Gartner** [↗gartner.com](#)
ALA Trends [↗ala.org](#) **IFLA Trend Report** [↗trends.ifla.org](#)

event, library visitors had the opportunity to discuss current issues and research methods with two investigative journalists. Why is their work for a democracy so important? What drives them personally? What role do they play in contrast to the investigating authorities? How do investigative journalists actually get the explosive information? The mostly young adult audience passionately discussed these questions with the journalists. Democracy is more than just checking a box on a ballot. That is why the Cologne Public Library's programs focus strongly on participation.

What Does All this Mean for the Future of the Library?

Rolf Hapel, long-standing director of the DOKK 1 library in Aarhus, Denmark, has compiled a report on the tasks facing libraries in the coming years, in eight scenarios based on the core values of the American Library Association. They perceive the library as: an Innovation Hub, as Fact-Based Trust Builder, as Social Equity Activist, as Sense-Maker, as Privacy Protector, as a Community Memory Bank, as a Sanctuary and as a Civic Lab (Hapel 2020).⁸

Accompanying these scenarios are various tasks for library staff, as supervisors in the innovation process, innovation coaches, fact finders, social workers, educators and storytellers.

The perception and image of the Cologne Public Library has gradually changed through new services such as makerspaces, digital workshops and collaborations with partners from other sectors. The Library's cooperation with schools is beneficial for both parties. Experience has long shown that libraries cannot be reduced to their classic functions as collection warehouses and reading promoters. They can do so much more. Libraries should be a place that inspires innovation and allows the unplanned to be experienced. Observing how knowledge is experienced and communicated today and how this will be done in the future is important. References to library-relevant innovations are found in annual trend reports, such as the Top 10 Technology Trends by Gartner, the IFLA Trend Report and ALA Trends.⁹ In addition, various studies on media use, consumer habits and media habits can be informative. Staying abreast of these reports helps to train one's eye on the future and helps one to review one's own approach on a regular basis. Which trends are relevant for libraries in the future? This is where each library, depending on its environment and strategic concept, must prioritize and make an individual decision based on local needs.

The makerspace philosophy, for example, provides an excellent foundation for the strategic expansion of the library based on its ongoing primary functions. According to Tobias Kremkau, the digital sphere functions very well as a catalyst for the analog, 'because the digital is neither separated from the analog in order to exaggerate its significance, nor is it isolated from the analog in order to devalue it'. However, highly dynamic developments characterize this field. It is necessary to continuously and proactively monitor and help shape the constant change. The motto 'explore, create, share' therefore applies not only to the users of the makerspace, but also, in the long term, to the entire library staff, including management.

The Cologne Public Library did not have a large budget to institute the change process. It reached out to donors with creative concepts and ideas for project funds and reallocated existing funds. It looked for new stakeholders and sought unusual partnerships. It counted on civic engagement and volunteers, such as the junior experts; young adults who led workshops. The Library outsourced measures, started staff development, invested in staff training and sought staff with additional qualifications and new job profiles, such as media pedagogues, project managers and creative guides. It instituted new methods such as design thinking and developed fourteen



Makerspace. Photo: Neumann.

cross-hierarchical teams. These team 'think tanks' developed ideas on innovative topics such as maker activities, games, diversity, VR, robotics, STEM and social media.

The library provides in-house staff training and uses webinars to train staff in all service locations. Materials and resources from the webinars and trainings are posted in a Wiki. Information is also posted on a staff blog, which is additionally used for internal staff discussions. Staff members participate in training sessions offered for patrons. As a final point: The library remembers to celebrate its success! All of this helped to change the library's public image and allowed it to secure funding. The library has the courage to be innovative and make mistakes. New projects are tried out before a decision is made to add them to the regular repertoire. The library ascribes to the motto that innovative initiatives do not have to last forever. The Cologne Public Library's modus operandi is to start small, plan quick wins, be courageous, look for partners and work as a team. The following African proverb comes to mind: 'If you want to go fast, walk alone. If you want to go far, walk together.'

About the author

Suzanne Payette has been the Director of the Brossard Public Library in Canada since 2007. She headed the Quebec Association of Public Libraries from 2004 to 2013.

Her leadership was instrumental in creating the province-wide e-book lending platform PRENUMERIQUE.CA. from 2009 to 2013, she chaired the IFLA Public Library Standing Committee. In 2007 and 2008, she participated in the Advisory Committee of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for the Access to Learning Award. She was delegate of OCLC Global Council from 2013 to 2019. In 2009, she was awarded the highest of Quebec Order of Professional Librarians, *Corporation des bibliothécaires professionnelles du Québec*, for her contribution to the development of Quebec public libraries, *Prix reconnaissance, milieu des bibliothèques publiques*.



Canadian Libraries – Open to the World by Suzanne Payette (Canada)

Canada is a vast territory principally composed of two historical linguistic communities: Anglophone and Francophone. Library development is the responsibility of the provinces and it is in large part financially supported by the municipalities. This explains the geographic discrepancies in their development. However, it has been apparent that in the last decade the development of Canadian libraries has kept pace with the growing digital needs of its society and that this development has allowed a democratic access to culture, to information, to literacy, and to education, be it literary, economical, digital or technological. This capacity to adapt has enabled libraries to develop and maintain bonds of trust with their communities.

Where Magic Still Happens

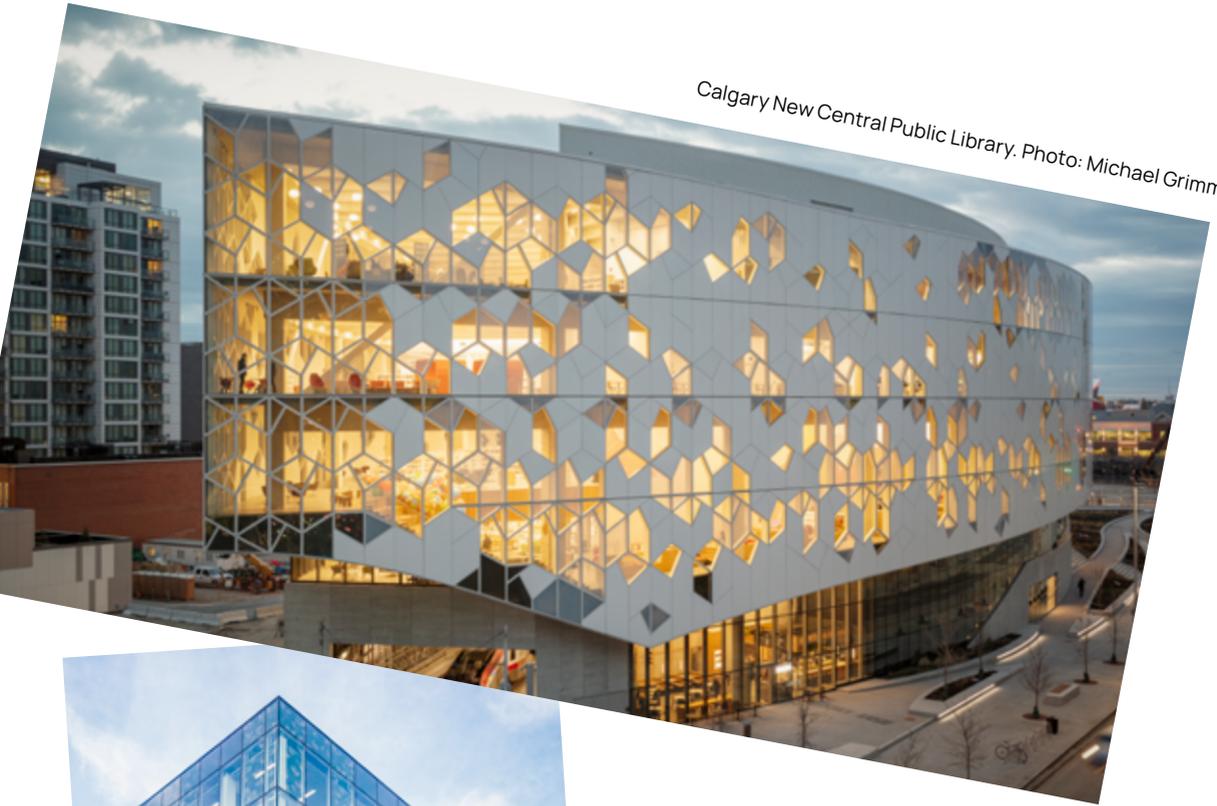
'Libraries continue to be regarded as essential, relevant and vital public institutions. Now new forces are shaping library design and are drawing users back. These forces include the proliferation of new media, the integration of non-media-activities, expanded and

convenient hours, the introduction of living-room customer-oriented conveniences. These include coffee houses and digital labs, retail outlets, and the new view of libraries as economic generators as well as hubs of urban revitalization. While timeless, libraries continue to evolve in the design of their interiors as well as in the services they provide according to the times in which we live. These changes, although truly challenging, have given rise to the construction of beautiful libraries from coast to coast.'

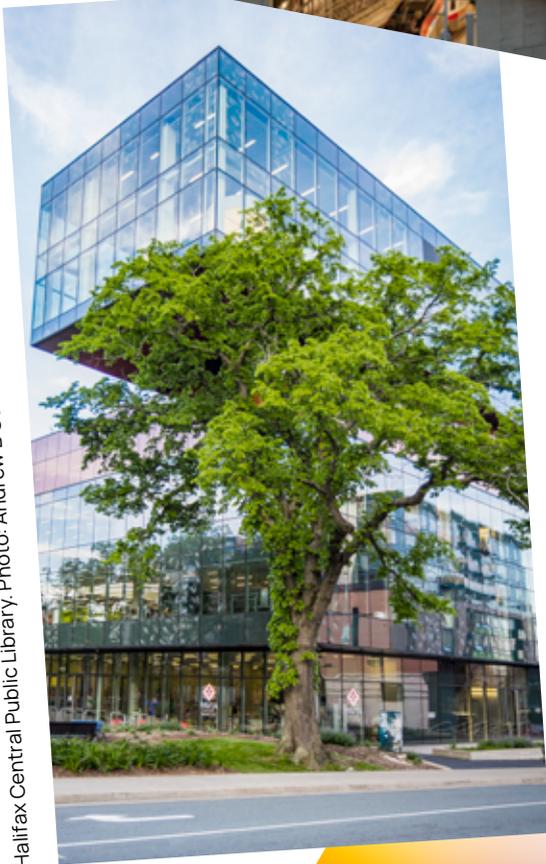
*Marie DeYoung*¹

Recent construction projects (Halifax, Montréal, Calgary) or renovations (Vancouver, Edmonton) have brought forth iconic architectural buildings that are the pride of these cities and that have become as a matter of course true tourist attractions. The new spaces are welcoming and luminous, havens of plenitude and inspiration, the whole melding into the urban landscape in which they are often situated.

Calgary New Central Public Library. Photo: Michael Grimm.



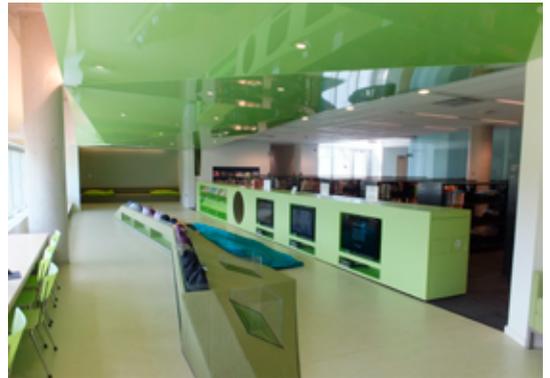
Halifax Central Public Library. Photo: Andrew B Conrad.



Canada's libraries offer diverse atmospheres that correspond to the profiles and to the needs of the different people that frequent them. Automated self-service stations give users more autonomy and independence. At the same time, these technologies transform the tasks and the roles of the employees who traditionally spent much of their time circulating books and other materials. This development has permitted the personalization of customer services by enriching library experience and making their collection and services more user-friendly. Libraries are increasingly able to provide home delivery of books for elderly patrons. Personalized, one-on-one support and guidance with computers and other technologies is the norm in most public libraries. In addition, libraries are regularly opening their doors to offer programs for kindergarten and school classes, as well as specialized programs to help new Canadian students with their homework.



SODA Teen Space Brossard Public Library Montréal.
Photo: courtesy of Brossard Public Library.



Youth sector Du Boisé Public Library.
Photo: Suzanne Payette.

The success of new these institutions has drawn the attention of the nation's political class and helped to establish a new understanding of the services libraries offer. Their attractiveness and the volume of visitors help to illustrate their impact and the value of their presence in the community. Their popularity can be seen even in remote regions of the country, where they serve as a source of inspiration for the people that live there. The idea of the library as a community space was well articulated in the recent opening of the renovated Stanley A. Milner Library in Edmonton, which showcased new technologies and comfortable, welcoming spaces, and more importantly invited the community to adopt the new space as their own.

An essential aspect of all recent projects is the incorporation of comprehensive public consultations. Typically, the community is invited to express their needs and expectations and each person's comments are taken into account by the architectural firms assigned to the project. This results in buildings and spaces that better correspond to the priorities and cultural values of the community they serve. Moreover, in many new recent projects, the inclusion of architectural elements specific to indigenous populations has made the building a true landmark for the whole community and underlined the importance of these communities within Canadian society.



Roof garden of Vancouver Public Library. Photo: Phillip Crocker.

At the core of every one of these projects are environmental and sustainable development criteria which in some cases results in LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)². These constructions include such features as green roofs and the integration of renewable energy sources. Space designs also ensure universal accessibility as well as the integration of public art.

The latest large-scale construction project to be undertaken in Canada is that of a new building in the nation's capital, Ottawa, which will serve as both the central library for the Ottawa Public Library as well as the reading rooms for the national library, Library and Archives Canada. The construction phase of this project will continue for the next five years. This new structure, the result of an innovative partnership between a public library and a

national library, will give Ottawa's citizens and visitors to the nation's capital access to rich collections representative of Canada's cultural heritage.

From Collections to Connections

Guy Berthiaume, former Librarian and Archivist of Canada, has said that Canadian libraries have taken on increasingly important roles in society: as places of discussion, as safe havens for the homeless, as incubators for start-up companies, as creativity hubs, and as welcoming places for newcomers to Canada.³ As places of continuing education, libraries offer opportunities for both digital learning and technological literacy. They organize financial literacy courses, programming marathons,

- 2 **LEED certification** constitutes a system of environmental standardization and evaluation of buildings created and managed by the US Green Building Council.
- 3 **Berthiaume, Guy.** Rethinking the Role of Libraries, Archives and Museums in the Age of Google. University of Manitoba: Colloquium, Department of History 28 February 2017.

seminars, as well as workshops for retirees. This new vision for library spaces, perceived by citizens as vibrant spaces, accentuates the role of libraries in maintaining social cohesion. These collaborative spaces help Canadians to face the challenge of continuous change that characterizes the present century. As sources of information and knowledge, they contribute to the creative process and ultimately serve to collect, preserve, and share creative works yet to come.

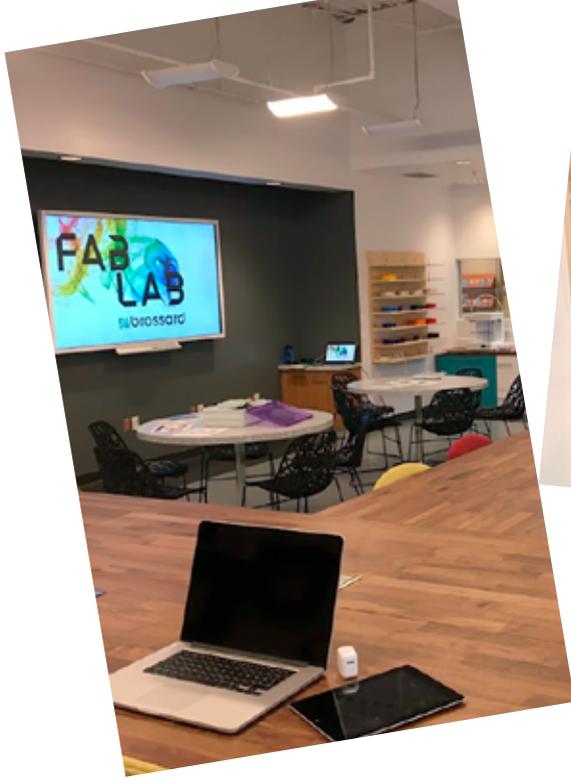
Citizens of the world who have chosen Canada as their new home quickly learn that Canadian libraries are places of inclusion open to diversity. Every library, in line with the specific characteristics of its community, develops programmes to help its clientele familiarize themselves with the local language and culture. This provides them with a better understanding of Canadian values and develops their sense of belonging to the society that welcomed them. Libraries recognize that the richness of this cultural diversity constitutes a heritage for future generations.

Canadian libraries are strong players in the digital era. From coast to coast, they offer access to information technology while supporting their users' development in their technical competency. The implementation of digital platforms and the access to an impressive number of electronic resources

have exploded this last decade, making library's collection available across a vast territory. The digitization of local archives permits the sharing of cultural treasures that have been carefully conserved. Throughout the country, cultural institutions can participate in the *National Heritage Digitization Strategy* and through their contributions make their collections accessible to a global audience. Thanks to the partnership with Wikipedia, information originating from Canadian libraries and archive centres is transmitted worldwide. In this way, paradoxically, the past comes to the present through a tablet, a mobile phone or a computer screen.

Accessible for the Whole Population

More and more Canadian libraries are home to makerspaces, sometimes referred to as fablabs, digilabs or medialabs. Specialized equipment enables the library's clientele to carry out 3D rendering projects, digitization projects, as well as video and audio production. This has allowed libraries to attract a new clientele of makers. These creative spaces are accessible to all and thanks to competent and passionate staff; libraries contribute to the democratization of digital technologies, facilitating both their instruction as well as their use. Libraries, places of lifelong learning,



Fab Lab Brossard Public Library.
Photo: courtesy of Brossard Public Library.



have distinguished themselves not only by their capacity to integrate continually new technologies, but also by their ability to make accessible their various uses, thus supporting citizens in the development of their skills and competencies.

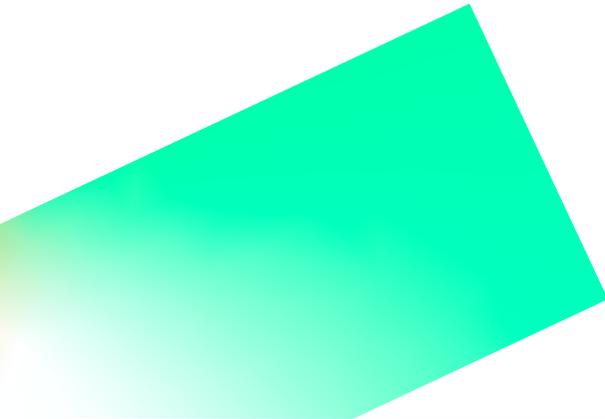
Although a vast majority of Canadians have access to the Internet at home (94% of Canadians in 2019), a significant proportion of the population continues to visit libraries to access the online resources and services. By offering access to high-speed internet, libraries support citizens of all ages, from the senior who wants the latest news or a genealogy database to the youth who completes his homework in a quiet environment or hones his gamer skills.

There are vast numbers of professional associations in Canada, be they national, provincial or territorial. They constitute networks that connect and cement the profession. Offering training, exchanges and socialization, they contribute to promote achievements and successes and assure

the development of professional competencies. They also often act as a bridge with the international community in the exchange of best practices.

In May 2016, the biggest association in Canada, The Canadian Library Association, dissolved and became The Canadian Federation of Library Associations. The mission of this new entity is to give a united voice to Canadian libraries in order to advance excellence and to increase the visibility of libraries in Canada.

To professional interest groups can be added philanthropic groups that are mainly composed of passionate spokespeople, and foundations that act as financial levers at the service of the institutions to which they are attached.



The Future is Built on Collaboration and Partnerships

From 2016 to 2019, a national conversation took place that demonstrated the value of GLAM partnerships (galleries, libraries, archives and museums) and their societal benefits. The Ottawa Declaration, adopted on 6 December 2016, stated the objectives of this initiative:⁴

- Increase collaboration between our institutions and our networks at the local and national levels to catalyze new partnerships that spark creativity and enhance engagement;
- Develop innovative programs and services, and adopt technologies that empower us to engage our publics; and
- Enrich and expand access to our collections to ensure that our institutions contribute significantly to the public good and sustainable development.

- 4 **The Ottawa Declaration**, Ottawa Declaration Working Group, accessed August 22, 2020, ottawadeclaration.ca
- 5 **Berthiaume, Guy**. 'If You Want to Go Far, Go Together: The Collaboration Among the GLAM Community in Canada (2016–2019)', *Research Library Issues*, No. 300 (2020): 6–17: doi.org

Following three summits in Toronto, Ottawa and Montréal, the Canadian GLAMs agreed on the foundational elements for a narrative designed to support the GLAM sector in its entirety. The goal of the narrative placed under the theme A Rapidly Changing World Needs GLAMs is to demonstrate the value and breath of the social benefits of GLAMs. It is built on four strong statements:⁵

- 1. People turn to GLAMs for the credible and trusted information they want and need.**
GLAMs remain the most trusted of public institutions.
- 2. People connect, experience, and write their stories together in and with GLAMs.**
In a digital landscape, GLAMs are inclusive physical and virtual spaces where people connect with and understand each other.
- 3. GLAMs help Canada prosper and innovate.**
GLAMs are economic engines that power smart, creative communities. They inspire entrepreneurs and artists and act as incubators for innovation and creativity of all kinds.

4. GLAMs make citizens and communities better. They enrich lives and are foundational to personal and community growth and regeneration. They favor greater emotional awareness, compassion, resilience, and openness to ideas that differ from our own.

In order to be more efficient and enlarge the service offer, libraries often partner with consortiums that provide services in different forms. For example, The Alberta Library (TAL) permits users of more than 300 libraries to access the entirety of the resources of each of its participating libraries. For its part, the Province of Quebec has instituted BIBLIOPRESTO and PRENUMERIQUE.CA, those consortiums manage a digital book platform and offers digital resources throughout its network of public libraries.

Libraries, like the whole of society, have been destabilized in 2020 by the Covid-19 pandemic. As public spaces were closed, their clientele no longer had access to their cherished spaces. However, many libraries have continued to play an important role in the transmission of pertinent information. The credibility of the institution as well as its ability to effectively communicate with social media positioned libraries as trusted sources of information during this public health crisis.

This period of distancing however has highlighted and driven the discovery and use of electronic resources available in libraries. Following this isolation period, it will probably be necessary to re-engage with users by offering them rejuvenated and engaging library experiences.

Challenges

Libraries have always been able to adapt to and overcome challenges in the past. Their ability to listen to their communities combined with the creativity, passion, and engagement of their professionals have permitted libraries to position themselves in the digital world by becoming welcoming resource centres. Globalization, the speed with which information circulates, and large-scale technological changes likely only represent the tip of the iceberg of the challenges that will be faced by libraries in the future, think only for instance of the challenges inherent to the permeability of borders and international travelling. An aging population will also require additional service transformations. Let us rely on the new generation of professionals who grew up surrounded by technology and many of whom are naturally open to the world. Let us not neglect to offer them the corresponding training in which mediation will be the key to accessing the entirety of resources found in libraries.



If the strength of digitalization is its easy access, its great weakness is no doubt its invisibility and lack of tangibility. Our great challenge is to highlight virtual collections while maintaining the association with library collections and services, which make them possible.

As a living environment, the library must also continue to set new parameters to evaluate the services it offers. Circulation statistics no longer reflect in and of themselves, the whole value of the library. Even though the economic and social impacts of libraries have been the object of numerous studies and their return on investment well established (between 4 and 5 dollars for every dollar invested), the challenge to disseminate this information on a large scale remains a major concern.

In our times, to be open to the world is no doubt the most valued connection. Expertise sharing, visits to innovative places, and meeting seasoned professionals contribute to the advancement and development of avant-garde libraries that contribute in turn to develop our society into a better one.

Further reading

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Cliche, L. & Martel, M.D. (2014). 'Cinq bibliothèques de Montréal dans la société du savoir : une nouvelle génération de tiers lieux' in: *Documentation et bibliothèques*, 60 (2-3) 99-104: doi.org

Martel, Marie, 'La bibliothèque comme troisième lieu durable' in: *Argus*, Automne 2011, p. 22-28.

About the author

Ilona Kish is a Library Avenger. As Director of Public Libraries 2030, she aims to create a stronger European library sector through EU advocacy and network building. A former Secretary General of Culture Action, Ilona has extensive experience in EU advocacy and campaigning, as well as a thorough working knowledge of both the operational and political functions of EU institutions.



On Advocacy: What on Earth is Advocacy?

– A Dummy's Guide
to Understanding
Advocacy and
Lobbying) by Ilona Kish
(Belgium)

Advocacy / advəkəsi / noun:
public support for or rec-
ommendation of a particular
cause or policy.

When I started my life as a European arts advocate, we often had a discussion on whether the word 'lobby' was a dirty word and that 'advocate' stood for something cleaner, of higher purpose.

Brussels is second only to Washington DC in the number of lobbies, interest groups, industry and trade associations and NGO's. Not to mention the numerous Public Affairs consultancies serving every aspect of European life seeking to become visible and to influence policy made in the corridors of power at the European Union.

As an advocate for the arts – an essential part of human life – we did not want

to be associated with the tactics and behaviour of say the Tobacco Lobby for example; legendary for gifting MEPs and high-ranking officials with free products, leaving tins of tobacco on desks. So what were we doing?

lobbyist / läbiist / noun: a person who takes part in an organized attempt to influence legislators.

Then, we decided we were not lobbyists but advocates as part of a community of non-governmental organisations who represent a sector of broad, general public interest. We were fighting the good fight. But I often wondered if we missed something. It took a long time for the arts advocacy organisations to become more effective, some would say more aggressive. Maybe part of the work was to learn something from those ruthless (and extremely effective) trade

lobbyists. Could we do it without sacrificing our core values and remaining ethical. This was the challenge and remains so for the Public Library sector today.

Today, I use advocacy and lobbying interchangeably, maybe advocacy has a feeling of a longer-term, perception shift action, and lobbying more sharply focused on a particular legislative moment. But the skills, tools and behaviours remain the same. We are talking about engaging with policy, and with those who make it. We are talking about influencing the behaviour and programming of a chosen legislative body, influencing it to the advantage of the sector we represent. Fortunately, we can also demonstrate that what is good for the public library sector, is generally good for the public they serve.

For the purposes of this contribution, when we talk about advocacy, we are talking about targeted and focussed actions to shift policy and policymaker's direction. For advocacy to be successful the first thing is to know what you want to achieve.

Public Libraries 2030 (PL2030) is the Brussels based project funded library and lobbying organization that was built upon the heritage of Public Libraries 2020 (PL2020), a lobbying organization funded by the Gates Foundation. One of the challenges for PL2030

and the library sector in general comes indeed from the broad function that libraries play in society. Do we limit ourselves to the direct professional interest of the sector that are governed by legislation – funding, working conditions, opening hours, copyright etc. – or are we at the other end, advocating for a societal transformation, one where libraries are at the heart of community-led democracies? A bold ambition for a sector that compared to those professional and trade lobbies is in its advocacy infancy.

Advocacy 101 for Libraries

For many years, we have run training sessions on Advocacy basics and advocacy tools specific to the EU environment. If the first thing you need to know is what you want to achieve, the second thing is to know where to ask for it. In other terms, you need to think out your plan of action; you need a strategy. Many years ago, then PL2020, we ran a survey on advocacy strategies in libraries. Whilst over 80% of respondents said they thought that a strategy was essential, less than 40% actually had one in place. What's the barrier?

Strategy! Strategy! Strategy! Key point is to get a strategic analysis done of your political environment. Who do you have



Generation Code at European Parliament.

to talk to, to get things done? Are the people who make the decisions, the ones with the real power? Or is influence elsewhere? Can you reach the influencers and decision-makers? Ethical question here: what if talking to a policymaker's wife is the right thing to do because she loves public libraries? Do or don't?

What do you have to prepare or research in advance? Do you need to know more about the legislative dossier or more about the decision maker? If you cannot get to them, can someone else do it for you? Whilst it is clear that the first steps are knowing your policy makers and understanding the legislative decision-making process, I'm finding it increasingly challenging to formulate compelling arguments and messages that can

take hold. We are taught that a balance of data and storytelling is what is needed, but policy makers are as prone as everyone else to distraction and disinformation by social media. If we lived in a world where policy makers would make good policy solely on the basis of clear evidence and strong example, the world would be a much different place.

So, without twisting yourself in knots, add a third string to your bow. Have good data? Tick! Have a great story? Tick! What else can make the case, or shift the position? Even if you know you might not win this round, might you lay the groundwork for a more sympathetic environment in the future?



Generation Code. Meeting Members of the European Parliament (MEP's).

Building the relationships is always the first move; finding people you can connect with, who share some basic principles and values; then building on that. This is the hardest part of advocacy to teach, because it relies so much on social skills and emotional intelligence. Sensing where allies and supporters can be found and nurtured.

The Library Brand

So, I have sometimes discussed with colleagues: what is the 'brand' that the word 'library' represents. With all the irony of the term, as for me, one of the great strengths of the library is the non-commercial nature of the space and the work we do. To put it another way, do we understand what is already in the room before we walk in? What do people think of when they hear 'library' and how can we use that to further our advocacy goals?

This question is useful because as libraries have broadened and deepened their scope of action, delivering a simple, graspable message becomes more challenging. We don't like to dumb down and minimise the extraordinary work that takes place in a library, so we often confuse the message trying to get it all in there. I always return to the 'rule of 3':

- Things that come in three are more persuasive;
- People process information using patterns;
- 3 is the smallest number that can form a pattern;
- Being brief and having a pattern makes our content memorable.

The rule of three is nicely demonstrated in an often used tool for building an advocacy message:

I often start with a message of 'relevance'. For a library to be useful, and to thrive, it must be relevant to the community is that the library is *relevant* to the community. This what I want them to remember.

What can you do? Based on your strategic analysis you'll have a good idea what you have to do and when you have to do it to be 'successful' (e.g. if you're looking to influence the climate portfolio you can't be asking to meet the minister of Culture). What you do not

want is what we used to call 'fig-leaf' advocacy: doing something to just be seen to be doing it. To tick a box. Publishing an open letter calling for change the week after the voting committee has met, happens a lot.

Early on in my days as an arts advocate, I read a fundraising article that was entitled 'big donors don't come from Mars'. The main point being you cannot expect to meet someone to fund you the day after you meet them. The general rule in fundraising is that it takes 18 months to 2 years to build a strong relationship with mutual understanding of what the goals are. To build a relationship of mutual trust. The same applies when it comes to advocacy.

In the public library sector, we do have some access to data, but at European level, very little comparative data. This could also be a question for the sector going forward, what data are we NOT collecting that might make a difference? How could we pool our resources to sharpen the data end of our advocacy? Successful advocacy strategy could be summed up with 'ask the right person, the right question, at the right time'. Added with: make sure the person you need to ask, knows you before you walk in the door!

Advocacy Within the Library

Advocacy should be mainstreamed across the organisation. Every staff member should have some idea of what advocacy is, and what kind of advocacy the library is doing, whether directly, or in co-operation with the library association or other actors.

Traditionally, the direct advocacy would be done by the senior representatives that go and see politicians. What you are taking to the politician is a vision and an idea of the ethics and value of your organisation. But that vision cannot be contained at the top only, it needs to trickle down to all staff members so they can advocate for it in their daily activities.

From a leadership point of view, every member of staff should understand and share the vision of the library and the community it serves. Ideally that translates into the most natural ambassadorship for every level of community. The point isn't to put a junior staff member in front of an official BUT the whole team needs to understand and share that vision so they can influence other members of the library and those in turn can advocate for you around them.



Generation Code at the European Parliament, introduction to virtual reality.

Maybe we forget that advocacy has not been in many people's minds and they do not think about what it is as a central part of the library world. I think that every new hire should be sensitized to some of those strategic objectives and have a basic understanding of the principles of soft, broad, narrow, targeted advocacy. All staff do not necessarily have to be directly involved, but they must understand and that is how you communicate the 'we don't take this for granted' message. It would of course be ideal if advocacy was a core element of Library and Information Science courses too.

Defensive or positive. By identifying the threats and possible issues in your sector and leading advocacy campaign in good time, you are making sure you are not taking for granted the existence of a library service. You recognize that in this day and age it's unwise to consider something as set in stone even institutions which have existed for decades. In 2016 – the library law in Flanders changed – no longer mandating the existence of a library in every commune district of Belgium. It was a wake-up call for the sector after a long period of relative complacency. Your advocacy cannot be just fear and defensive based, and it cannot be just positive and creative, there needs to be a balance.

Linking back to strategic analysis, your advocacy can be positive and creative if you have identified pushes and pulls in the sector where you can exert influence and drive change there. The key thing is to remember that times may be dark (we're facing cuts etc.) but your focus should be on the resources you have (informed staff, a building, and a relationship with the community) and how you can use them in your vision of the library and be relevant to the community.

Conclusion: What's Next for Libraries?

Everything I have briefly touched upon in this contribution could be viewed as part of a professionalization of the library sector. A sector that recognises the constant competition for public funds, for an audience, and basic attention. Understanding that we are not a protected sector and that we will have to continually defend and articulate our role is key to our ongoing existence.

It's not impossible to imagine more explicit support for libraries at European level, even though there is not a direct legislative or funding competence which makes it more challenging. Libraries can take up more

space than they do. In terms of legislative outcome that is something you can think of. The potential for public libraries and all kinds of libraries to be present in policy and funding discussions across a wide range of EU policies is high. There are so many environments where I am the first and only person who brought up what libraries might do to contribute to the success of a policy initiative! It tells me the potential that is there. To have a much bigger, visible, coordinated library presence, really working all those emerging angles is our dream at PL2030. In this way we can develop a perception of *libraries* as spaces where democracy is cared for and cultivated, where citizens thrive and share, and where community is transformed.

About the author

As Library Director of Aarhus Public Libraries, Marie Østergård oversees Dokk1 (the main library) and 18 branches. Since the beginning of her career in 2001 she has been part of Aarhus' development of the library as a democratic space, a non-commercial space that empowers citizenship, sustainable communities and human growth. Focusing on the knowledge city, user-involvement, partnerships, design thinking and rethinking of library space, she has investigated new technologies, involvement processes and organisational learning in library development.

From 2005-2015 Marie was the project leader of the building of Dokk1, implementing and developing these ideas as well as introducing new formats of user- and citizen involvement in the planning and building of Dokk1, that opened in June 2015. Dokk1 is the largest public library in the Nordic Countries and won the Public Library of the Year Award in 2016. It has been highly acclaimed both in- and outside the library world for its rethinking of library spaces, partnerships, involvement of users and part-taking in city development. After the opening of Dokk1, Marie took on a leadership position focusing on community engagement, partnerships and design thinking. In 2017 she was appointed Library Director of all 19 libraries in Aarhus. Throughout the years she has worked intensely with co-creation and partnership - nationally and internationally - to push development, network and innovation in the library sector.



Libraries As Hubs For Democracy

by
Marie Østergård (Denmark)

The word democracy carries many connotations and values depending on nationality, cultural- and political background. To some it means voting at elections, to others it is a description of a governing system.

But when we speak about democracy in a library context, often words like community activism or civic engagement become part of the vocabulary. In Aarhus Public Libraries we have decided that it is time for us to widen our perspective and discuss democracy in libraries in a broader context. Based on many years of transforming the library we have decided to use the findings to take a deeper dive into how libraries can play an essential part in community development, with democracy development as framework. Our starting point is that democracy is a conversation that allows everybody to participate. It is a conversation about society, feelings, structures, values, opinions and needs that demands respect for each other. It is a conversation that stimulates our curiosity, provokes, makes us wiser or makes us eager to know more.

Over the past years it has become increasingly clear to us that the issue of libraries as hubs for democracy development could very well be the library's single most essential topic; our reason of being. And that every time we take a closer look at some of our core services, challenges or successes in our libraries, democracy seems to be the overall

thematic essence. But to further investigate the library as a hub for democracy and democratic spaces we found that we needed to change the conversation and allow for a new language to embrace and enlarge the many aspects of democracy where libraries could and should play a role. We needed to verbalize and think democracy as an active part of who we are and everything we do.

As we have begun this conversation nationally and internationally it has become increasingly clear, that in order to even have an investigative conversation that can widen perspectives we need to do three things: (1) insist on broadening, diversifying and unfolding the language we use about democracy, (2) allocate specific resources to test, experiment and prototype what democracy looks like in our libraries, and (3) engage in international conversation to gain perspective and investigate how this approach might strengthen the library field on a global scale. In their core libraries are democratic institutions. They have always been about equal access to knowledge, and they are instrumental in raising people's knowledge and awareness so that they are able to grow. Democracy in that perspective is and should be an aspect of everything we do in libraries. In Aarhus we made a strategic decision to take a deeper dive into our mind-set, services, and operations. We have set out to spend the next

- 1 **Demokratikommisionen** / DUF – Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd og forfatterne, ed.: Jakob Kaastrup Sørensen and Daniel Honoré Jensen, 22. January, 2020
- 2 **Troværdighedsanalyse**, 2019, RADIUS
- 3 **IDEO 2015**. Design Thinking for Libraries- A toolkit for patron-centered design. designthinkingforlibraries.com By IDEO, Chicago Public Libraries and Aarhus Public Libraries.

two years investigating the different angles of democracy in the library. To experiment with formats, themes, involvement, topics, and relations in order to grow more knowledge of how the library can become an even stronger hub for democracy. To begin developing a new language and mind set in our own practice that will put democracy at the core of everything we do. What is the democratic aspect of our maker activities? What is the democratic aspect of our literacy work? Of start-up events? Of play? Of literature? Of our work with Sustainable Development Goals? Of open data? Of homework cafes? Of...?

We need to investigate and learn to become explicit in the work we do. And in order to make it clear to both citizens, partners, politicians and to ourselves that libraries are first responders in matters of democracy and democratic participation. Setting out on this explorative journey we start from a number of assumptions based on experience, that have shaped the way we do libraries in Aarhus. And that we consider to be important hinges linking libraries and democracy closely together. Thus, we have set out to explore how these can be used, strengthened, and developed focusing on democracy in libraries.

Democracy / the Library is Public Participation

In 2018 the Danish Youth Council created a national Democracy Commission to investigate the state of democracy in Denmark.¹ The commission was asked to look at societal tendencies that had begun to merge. Seemingly local citizens' engagement is booming in Denmark, but apparently more and more people feel left behind, and representativeness of those engaging is narrowing. And although voting rates in Denmark are among the highest in the world, it seems that the trust in politicians and politics is decreasing rapidly. Closely linked with a growing scepticism towards media. In 2019 a Danish national research on trust and credibility showed that media and politicians (together with car salesmen) are among the three least trusted professions.² At the highest end of the scale, libraries are the fourth most trusted, only outranked by midwives, nurses, and doctors.

The Democracy Commission appointed four fundamental areas of democracy: (1) political parties, policy development and representativeness, (2) media and the democratic conversation, (3) citizens, civic society and participatory democracy, and (4) governance, legislative- and decision



Ramp at Aarhus Public Libraries.

processes. All areas that are currently undergoing significant changes. In all four areas the commission formulated the most central democratic challenges and possible approaches to solutions. Looking at this from a library perspective we recognize that in all four areas, the crucial components are public participation, facilitation, community partners and a safe space to engage. All of which are components that we, as libraries, are trained in creating with a high level of legitimacy and trust. And just as interestingly, the diversity of people apparently lacking in the democratic conversations are highly represented among library users.

User involvement and design thinking³ is a large part of the way we work in Aarhus Public Libraries, in smaller incremental changes as well as in larger more radical developments.



Children design thinking. Photo: Aarhus Public Libraries.

4 **Pew Research Center** (2018). In Western Europe, Public Attitudes towards News Media More Divided by Populists View than Left-Right Ideology. journalism.org

- 5 **DR Medieforskning** (2018). "Medieudviklingen 2017 - DR Medieforsknings årlige rapport om udviklingen i danskernes brug af elektroniske medier".
- 6 **Institut for Menneskerettigheder** (2019). "Demokratisk Deltagelse på Facebook". menneskeret.dk

For several years, Aarhus Public Libraries partnered with Chicago Public Libraries in projects supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, focusing on how to develop a stronger mind-set on design thinking in libraries. The Design Thinking for Libraries toolkit was a product of this co-operation and has been translated into numerous languages and is now used around the world. From experience, we know that working with design thinking has significant impact in developing libraries that align with community needs. And it has become evident that applying design thinking methods to our development and work not only improves the quality, but the community ownership of the library and its spaces grows significantly. When the library creates space for co-creation, users

take ownership and the library increasingly becomes a community hub for conversation and innovation. Thus, when we start exploring democracy development in our libraries, design thinking and user involvement will be our methodological starting point and our mind set for exploring, how we can strengthen public participation and democratic conversation in new ways.

Democracy / the Library – a Place for Debate

Nuanced and diverse public debates, with a multitude of angles and viewpoints are essential for democracy. But research shows that the democratic conversation in Denmark is becoming increasingly challenged in many public conversations. It might be safe to assume that the same is true in other countries too. We believe that the library is an excellent place to train democratic practice, creating a safe place for moderated debate and exchange of ideas. 66% of the adult population in Denmark get their news from social media.⁴ However, only 7% trust the news that they get from the same social media⁵ and 59% stay out of debate on social media because of the hostile tone.⁶ This is a serious democratic problem.



Design thinking. Photo: Aarhus Public Libraries.



Debate Clement. Photo: Aarhus Public Libraries.

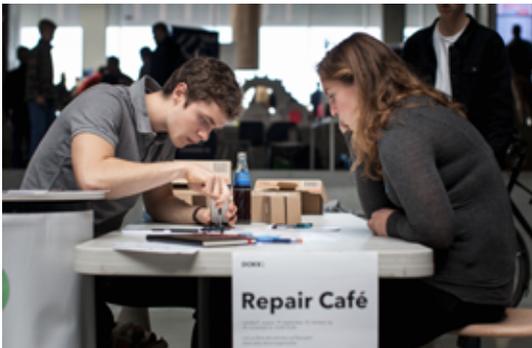
In general libraries are considered a trust-worthy, independent, and non-political institution and this independent, safe environment might be exactly what people need to re-enter the democratic conversation. We take this identity very seriously and we should indeed. In this case being independent and non-political means that the library should be without political or religious advocacy. However, we must be able to present and moderate discussions with different political viewpoints or topics with a political content in the library. Societies needs fields for debates, helping create a debate culture that allows disagreement without giving way to hate speech or threats. This can be done in libraries without losing independence.

In countries like Norway and Finland public libraries are obligated through their legislation to be independent meeting places and arenas for debate and to strengthen active citizenship, democracy and freedom of speech.⁷ These legislations state it to be library core business. Highly inspired by that we have tried in Denmark to push for a similar legislation but have not yet succeeded. We want that obligation. We wish for politicians and decision makers to think of the library as a place for people to get involved in development of their community. And we wish that the public demands this kind of involvement in community decisions and expects it to happen in the library.



Homework partner. Photo: Aarhus Public Libraries.

For many years we have worked in Aarhus to make the library space a central community hub; a space that people in the community use for their own activities as well as join activities of others and share ideas. We have transformed our spaces into open flexible spaces that embrace citizen-led activities and co-creation. This is probably most significant in Dokk1 – Aarhus' main library.



Repaircafé. Photo: Aarhus Public Libraries.

Planning Dokk1, we worked intently on creating open, flexible, un-programmed spaces that embrace user-led programmes and events. We re-shaped the library organisation to support ideas and activities brought in by users, partners, and network. As a result, Dokk1 has become a central community space where citizens and various groups and organizations establish new connections and relationships between ideas, knowledge, and people. Instead of the library merely being a space for media, the library space has become a media in itself.

Democratic participation in the library space demands equal access to fill the space with what you believe to be important. Supporting social sustainability, the diversity of spaces, services and programmes are opportunities for users from all social levels, educational backgrounds, religious beliefs and political convictions to always be able to find a space to engage with others, a learning session to relate to, a performance to give, a way to engage in local politics, an opportunity to socialize and a possibility of cultural experience and knowledge sharing. When the library creates physical spaces for open co-creation, users take ownership of the spaces and the library increasingly becomes a community hub.

Working with both the physical spaces as well as the organizational mind-set, we have seen how the library space has become a safe



Childrens cardboard workshop. Photo: Aarhus Public Libraries.

space for people to engage in and explore even topics that might feel uncomfortable or challenging. It stimulates democratic engagement, but just as importantly it creates an opportunity to strengthen the democratic conversation in a safe environment. Having created a mind-set and physical framework for participation the next step for us will be to discuss, develop and experiment with the boundaries and see how far we can go if we make democracy a part of everything we do.

Democracy is Literacy / the Library is Literacy and Movement

As described, we see spaces and involvement as essential tools for democratic involvement. But what we have found through interviews and observations is that although many people wish to be involved and participate, often the main obstacle



Digital literacy. Photo: Aarhus Public Libraries.

is that they feel incapable both concerning knowledge level as well as structures around engagement and processes. Processes and structures that seem natural and obvious to some people can be an insuperable obstacle to others and stop them from engaging in public debates and community decisions. 'A people that read cannot be easily manipulated', stated Mario Vargas Llosa at an event in Aarhus in 2019.¹² Working in libraries we share a common understanding that reading is important, and we are often capable of listing numerous reasons why. Even so, reading as activism to strengthen democracy is rarely part of the conversation. As libraries we have an obligation to create better readers to make sure that everybody can engage actively and enlightened in the society that surrounds them. To do that reading is essential; both the ability to read as well as the urge to read and gain knowledge about other versions of life than your own.

However, in libraries we know that literacy is not only about reading. We deal with many types of literacy, and we need to

investigate what happens when we combine those with democracy. In doing so we find that media literacy becomes about identifying biased media representation, recognising echo chambers and algorithmic selections. It becomes about identifying and separating fakes from facts, as well as discussing the framework for democratic digital conversations. We see that health literacy is about social inequality, that democratic literacy is about community engagement and understanding local community structures, and that digital literacy is about privacy, understanding media structures, and having influence on how your data is used. And the list goes on. Thus, using democracy as the starting point has a tremendous impact on how we deal with the many types of literacy we work within libraries, what language we use to identify it, and how we shape our services

In Aarhus we work intensely with partnerships and co-creation. Several years ago, we created a strong partnership strategy, and as a result approximately 40% of all

programmes and events in our libraries are carried out by or with partners; both local, national, and international. With more than 2500 programmes and events each year this means a lot of partners volunteering to work inside libraries as part of our everyday business and taking ownership to library values. Partnerships are always about creating services and programmes for citizens, that could not be done without the skill set of partnership organisations. We have seen that partnerships in many ways are the drivers of library development and new opportunities and we see this happening too in working with democracy.

Engaging heavily with both local, national, and international communities, libraries are no longer a fixed, stationary entity in traditional terms. And beginning to explore the field of democracy further it has become even more clear that the library is no longer merely an institution, an organisation, a space, or a building. It is a movement. It is a movement of citizens, network, partners, private businesses, politicians, start-ups, associations and a whole lot of other actors that each contributes with their own piece in creating ideas, bringing people together and being an active player in civic society. The library as a movement is an inclusive 'we' that breaks down barriers between local government, civic society, and people to give space for influence and participation.

Libraries move in different political and cultural landscapes so obviously our formats and approaches must be shaped and adjusted according to the climate and community we navigate in. Respecting the context, we believe there is an enormous potential in looking at the library as a hub for democracy. A hub that strengthens people's ability to navigate and influence their own lives as well as the society that they are part of, to improve life conditions for themselves and that of others. In Aarhus Public Libraries we have set out to explore and develop this potential focusing on libraries as democracy.

We think that it is time for libraries to become loud and enthusiastic about the enormous democracy building force libraries can be if we have the courage. So, over the next years we will work to go deeper and aim higher; we will practice, experiment, prototype and evaluate. We will try to learn as much as we can about what works, what fails, who we need to partner with, how we advocate this, what are the challenges and what competences are needed. We will discuss it locally, nationally, and internationally. And most importantly, we will work hard to make it a conversation where everybody can participate.

About the author

Basheerhamad Shadrach is currently serving the Commonwealth of Learning as Advisor. Having served as the Founder-Chair of the Indian Public Library Movement, he stepped down following his relocation to Canada in July 2019 to pave way for its new leadership. He was highly devoted to see the IPLM emerge as the 'voice' of the Indian public librarians and the other stakeholders interested in reviving public libraries in India. Working under the leadership of Sir Tim Berners-Lee, he was also the Asia Coordinator for the World Wide Web Foundation for its Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) program. In this capacity, he helped to build coalitions of private, public and civil society organizations to advance the shared aim of affordable access to both mobile and fixed-line internet in Asia.

Prior to the above assignments, Basheerhamad served as the global director of the Telecentre.org Foundation. And, prior to that, Basheerhamad worked for IDRC, Canada, managing ICT4D research grants in Asia, including the Mission 2007: every village a knowledge centre in India. In partnership with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), he has also launched the Telecentre Women: Digital Literacy Campaign which has been recognized for offering digital skills to over 1 million women worldwide in March 2014.



Public Library Movement in India

by Basheerhamad Shadrach (India)

'I have come here to rule', said a 12-year-old Gopal Rao on reaching Baroda after treading 600 kilometers on foot, a journey he undertook with his father and brothers from Kavhana in the year 1875. Gopal Rao presented himself before the then British Government and Maharani Jamnabai, who were looking for a suitable successor to Malhar Rao who was deposed by the order of the secretary of State for India, Lord Salisbury, as the King of Baroda. Renamed and adopted by Maharani Jamnabai, Gopal Rao ascended into the throne on 16 June 1875, would soon be known as Maharaja Sayajirao III, Gaekward of Baroda, but also be recorded as one of those few who democratized knowledge in the modern history of India. He opened the private collection of his knowledge objects as a public library of India in Baroda in modern times.

Groomed by Raja Sir Tanjore Madhava Rao, an Indian statesman, civil servant, administrator, and politician, Gopal Rao displayed many good qualities as a young protégé with foresight and a will to provide welfare services to his people. He helped to lift people from poverty, brought about agricultural, social and judicial reforms, developed the textile sector in his state, legalized divorce, removed untouchability and developed religious education, but above all applied the UNESCO mantra, 'Education for all' in the early part of 20th Century India.

His rich library became the source of knowledge for his reformist zeal and for his rationale to introduce, in 1906, compulsory and free education in his state, thus, entering the annals of Indian history as the first Maharaja to have done so. He had by then enabled, not only the Public Library of Baroda which he opened to the general public, but also a network of town and rural libraries in his state. It is stated that Gopal Rao was inspired by the progress of American public libraries during his visits to the US where he met William Alanson Borden and requested him to replicate similar public library services in his state. Fifteen years after the Connemara public library was established in Madras in 1896, Borden arrived in Baroda in 1910 to help Gopal establish the first public library system in the modern India.



Maharaja Sayajirao III.

The Rise and Fall of the Ancient Libraries in India

In the ancient times, Taxila, Nalanda, and Vikramashila were known as the centers of learning. Located about 95 kilometers southeast of Patna, near the city of Bihar Sharif, Nalanda was the seat of learning from fifth century until 1200 AD, attracting students from Tibet, China, Korea, and Central India. Much of it is known from the writings of pilgrim monks from Asia, such as Xuan Zang and Yijing who were among the best-known alumni of Nalanda. It became evident from the fact that a large number of texts that Yijing carried back with him after his 10-years of residency at Nalanda that there was a well-stocked library. The existence of a great library at Nalanda named, Dharmaganja with three large multi-storied buildings, the Ratnasagara, the Ratnodadhi and the Ratnaranjaka are recorded in many traditional Tibetan sources. It is stated that Ratnodadhi was a nine-storied library which housed many manuscripts including the Prajnyaparamita Sutra and the Guhyasamaia. It was estimated that the library followed its own classification scheme and stocked hundreds of thousands of items in its library collections, including manuscripts, texts such as grammar, logic, literature, astrology,

astronomy, and medicine. Although Nalanda was rebuilt twice after each time it was destroyed, the third destruction in 1200 AD meant the ancient library would be extinct forever.

World's First and Largest Public Library

After the destruction of Nalanda, it took seven centuries before Maharaja Sayajirao III would re-introduce the concept of libraries in India. It was the first ever public library system, thanks to his vision and the eagerness to democratize knowledge. With free and compulsory education, open access to knowledge through the network of libraries was a possibility. When Maharaj Sayajirao III invited William Alanson Borden to Baroda, the university of the Panjab in Lahore invited Asa Don Dickinson in 1915 to organize its university library system in the lines of the American system. Referred to as an engineer-librarian, it is stated that Borden designed library appliances such as book stands, newspaper reading tables, catalog card cabinets and introduced these in Indian libraries. Therefore he is also remembered as an apostle of international librarianship.



About his partnership with India, Borden quoted: 'I determined to introduce into Baroda what we in the United States have recognized as a goal to be ultimately attained, but which we have not yet reached... if there is any value in this library cooperation throughout a large state, let it be remembered that it was first introduced, not in the home of the modern library movement, our own country, but way down in India 10,000 miles from here...'

The first ever public library survey was conducted in circa 1910 at Baroda by Borden and helped to determine the number and the nature of collection, number and nature of city and branch libraries, and the inadequacy of systems that challenged these libraries and the resources required to unleash their potential. The survey also led to advocacy for fund allocation for newer resources; library buildings; establishment of village and town libraries; organization of material; diversification and expansion of collection; establishment of library curriculum; introduction of services to different clientele, including women and children; appointment of women librarians; and above all, freeing public libraries for the use by the general public at all levels for a minimum period of time. Thus, introducing the concept of open access very early in the public library system in India. Library tax was proposed as the means to sustain funding for the library system in the state. Implementation of all the

above, led to the introduction of library rules, which, formed the basis for a library law as early as 1912. The combo of Borden and the Maharaja became central to the introduction of many changes in the library movement, especially towards the expansion of services, aimed at all sections of society.

Birth of the Modern Public Library Movement by Christian Missionaries

The Baroda state's library movement was evolving as a model when, with the invention of the printing press and its introduction in India, thanks to Christian missionaries who brought the technology, the concept of printed book as the prime knowledge material emerged in the 16th century. The East India Company made Calcutta the so-called British capital for about four decades since 1773. In the Old Fort in Bengal the concept of a circulating library was piloted, though not made public because it was for the reading pleasure of the elite.



William Carey.

Raja Rammohun Roy, on whose name the Indian public library system rests today, wanted to learn English while being employed for the East India Company. He came in contact with a Christian missionary, William Carey, who in turn wanted to learn Sanskrit. Carey and Roy were instrumental in many transformative reforms in India, including the elimination of the practices of Sati and child marriage. As the founder of the theistic society, the Brahma Samaj, Roy was influenced by the missionaries Joshua Marshman and William Carey who worked to reform the traditional caste system and the improvement of the social status of women and children in society. He played an important role in advocating for women's rights, including education, property, and widow's re-marriage. He opposed polygamy, female servitude and widow burning. Carey and Roy were successful in abolishing the practice of Sati in 1829 by the British governor general of India, William Bentinck.

The Calcutta Library Society and the Madras Literary Society were established in 1818 with a view to providing a library for the citizens of Calcutta and a literary collective for the citizens of Madras, respectively. Around this

time, circa 1808, the Library Society of Bombay took shape too. Perhaps, these initiatives can be stated as the prelude to the origin of Indian modern public library movement. These moves also led to the establishment of public libraries in princely states of India and the Press and Regulation of Books Act that was proclaimed in 1867, paving the way for the establishment of the Connemara Public Library in Madras in 1896 and the Imperial Library at Calcutta in 1891.

Lord Curzon renovated and opened the Imperial Library on 30th January 1903 which in independent India has since been recognized as the National Library of India. Two other notable libraries established around the time were the Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library in Patna, Bihar in 1891 which still possesses rare Arabian and Persian manuscripts and the Sarawati Mahal Library in Tanjore, which also possesses rare manuscripts in Tamil and Sanskrit, which was opened to the public in the year 1918. The most notable Marathi King who ruled Tanjavur, Serfoji II studied under the influence of a German Reverend Schwartz and made sure that he had a great collection of literature from various parts in India in different languages. The Christian missionaries who wanted to liberate education and democratize the acquisition of knowledge and strived to spread human values helped the Maharajas of those times to establish the modern public library movement in India.

The Ranganathan Era of Indian Librarianship

The Ranganathan era which commenced in 1923 when Shiyali Ramamirtha Ranganathan first interacted with the library movement through his appointment as librarian of university of Madras. On the eve of his interview, among the 900 strong applicants, Ranganathan digested the concept of libraries by reading an article about libraries in Encyclopedia Britannica and prepared himself to face the interview the following day. To his surprise, he was selected and appointed for the position in January 1924. The mathematician-librarian would then go on to transform the public library movement in the pre- and post-independent history of India until his death in 1972 when the nation witnessed the establishment of Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation.

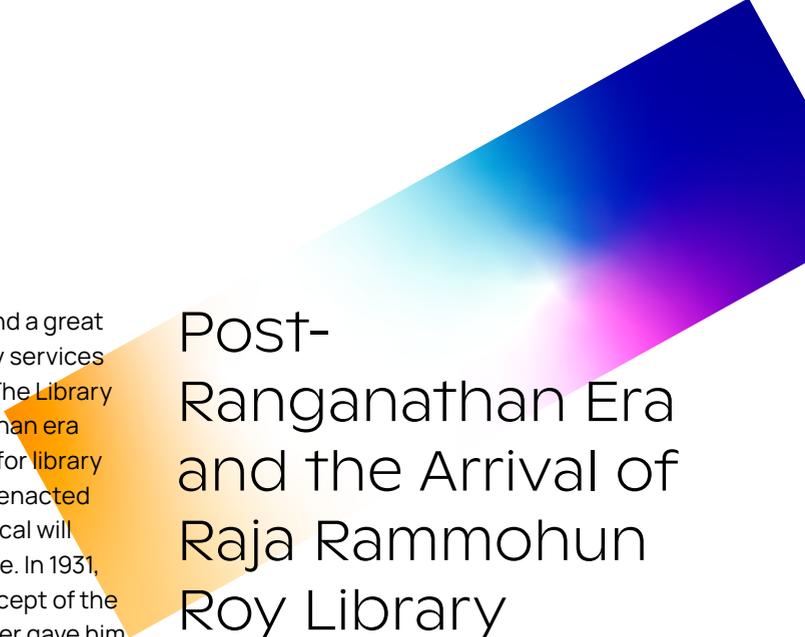
Honoring the contributions of Roy in the year 1972, during the silver jubilee of India's independence and the bicentenary year of the birth of Roy, the department of Culture instituted the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation to spread library services throughout the country in cooperation with provincial government. During his lifetime,



S.R. Ranganathan.

following his appointment as university librarian, Ranganathan not only educated himself in librarianship but would go on to establishing library schools as founding director in various Indian universities. He would help pass the first Indian library legislation in independent India, the Madras Public Library Act in 1948 based on his own model library act which he unveiled in the year 1930. In his model act, Ranganathan made provisions for library grants and library access as means to sustain library systems at the provincial level.

Although, at that time, his model act was not accepted, he enacted library acts in various states once he was successful in the state of Madras. He entwined education and libraries as inseparable twins and advocated for libraries as instruments to help educationist become life-long learners and libraries to become the heart of every educational institution in the nation. His inability to enact



a Union Library Bill in 1948 left behind a great imbalance in the provision of library services in the different provinces of India. The Library Acts enacted during the Ranganathan era were robust and had the provision for library grants and access, while the ones enacted post Ranganathan era lacked political will and financial support from the state. In 1931, Ranganathan pronounced the concept of the Five Laws of Librarianship which later gave him the recognition of being called the Father of Indian Library Science.

Ranganathan's contribution to Indian librarianship has been unparalleled until date. Apart from the Five Laws of Library Science, his selected list of achievements can be enlisted as follows: basic principles of classification; colon classification; classified catalogue code; Madras Public Library Act, and subsequent acts in several provinces of India; establishment of library schools; and the establishment of the Documentation Research and Training Centre. Two major attempts were made by the government during the Ranganathan-era to revitalize library systems. The first that of the K.P. Sinha Committee of 1957 that attempted to draft a model library bill. The second was the working group on libraries constituted by Indian Planning Commission in 1964 which did nothing beyond forwarding the Model Public Libraries Bill to the provinces; only to receive the expected lukewarm response.

Post-Ranganathan Era and the Arrival of Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation

Ranganathan's death also marked the birth of Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) in India. As an autonomous organization established and completely funded by ministry of Culture of the union government, RRRLF is the highest operational body for public library affairs in the nation, extending matching grants as well as non-matching grants to provinces that are responsible for running public libraries in India. As a body with its own constitution, RRRLF can partner with any institution and stimulate public library functioning in India as follows:

- To promote library movement in the country
- To enunciate a national library policy and to help build up a national library system
- To provide financial and technical assistance to libraries

- To provide financial assistance to organizations, regional or national engaged in the promotion of library development
- To publish appropriate literature and to act as a clearing house of ideas and information on development in India and abroad
- To promote research on problems of library development
- To advise the government on all matters pertaining to the library development in the country

In the post-Ranganathan era, a few attempts with little or no major success were witnessed in the public library world. These include the establishment of a working group for modernizing library services for input into the seventh five year plan, appointed by the Planning Commission during the sixth plan period; a report was submitted recommending the need for formulating a national policy on library services and informatics. Following the recommendations, India witnessed the formation of a committee on national policy on library and information system, famously known as the Chattopadhyaya Committee which submitted its report to the ministry of Human Resources Development. Attempts to create a model Public Library Act, initiated by the Indian Library Association and RRRLF met with some success for the policy was merged with the National Cultural Policy in 1993. Thereafter, during the Eleventh Plan period, a high-level



Jai Christ Community Library. Photo: provided by Priyanka Mohan.

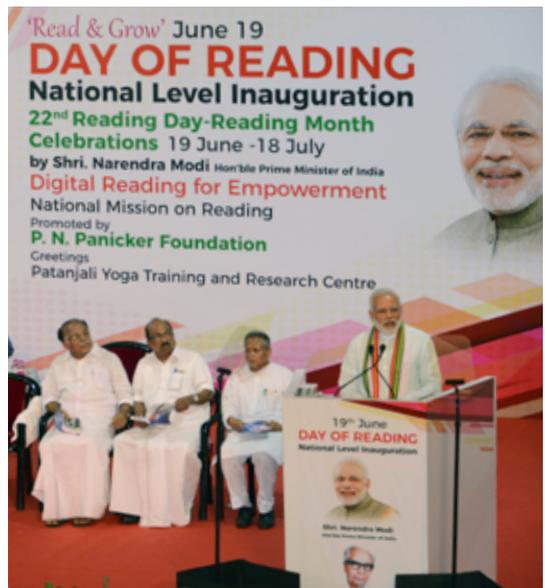
advisory body to the Prime Minister of India called, the National Knowledge Commission had a sub-group looking at library matters in the nation. The group submitted its report with a roadmap for revitalization of public libraries in 2006. As a result of this, a national mission on libraries was established with Professor Dipak Pental as its chairperson. Following his resignation, this mission currently functions under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, ably guided by RRRLF.

Arrival of Indian Public Library Movement (IPLM)

When the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), after its successful revitalization program in the US, wanted

to promote public library networks around the world, its efforts in Chile was a stunning success. The BMGF's Global Library Program created a worldwide movement, thanks to the visional leadership of ms Deborah Jacobs and the movement indeed focused India also as a potential nation for rejuvenating the nation's public library system. An initial pilot project with four local organizations resulted in the empowerment and revitalization of a handful of libraries in the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. This experiment encouraged the BMGF to provide a substantial grant to the NASSCOM Foundation for creating and sustaining a public library movement in India. Thus, the Indian Public Library Movement (IPLM) was born which embarked upon supporting the scaling up of services in over 100 libraries in the nation, at the district levels, and in developing public policy discourse.

IPLM also held three national level annual conferences as means to network and bring together actors involved in public library work. Unfortunately, after the initial enthusiasm, with the change of leadership at NASSCOM Foundation, the program was transformed into a digital literacy project, resulting in the movement requiring a new lease of life. Currently, led by some eminent librarians of the nation, the IPLM is a registered public trust with certain activities such as webinars and colloquiums. Around the same



Day of reading.

time, BMGF was also responsible for promoting the idea of developing young innovators in public library field, through a partnership with M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) under a project called, International Network of Emerging Library Innovators (INELI). Currently, with over 100 innovators on board, the INELI project is steered by MSSRF. It is anticipated that a regional NGO set up by the early innovators shall sustain the program in the long run.

The Future of Public Libraries in India

In 2017, the prime minister of India launched a national effort called the Reading Mission 2022, led by the P.N. Panicker Foundation which looks to replicate the efforts in the state of Kerala across the entire nation. There has been a clarion call by the prime minister to promote reading habits among 300 million Indians who hail from families below the poverty line. The prime Minister specially called for IPLM to play a key role in steering the mission together with the P.N. Panicker Foundation. Late Shri P.N. Panicker, known as the father of library and reading movement in Kerala, was instrumental in laying a strong foundation that promoted reading habits among the citizens of the state. Kerala was declared the first state to attain total literacy and a district in Kerala was declared the first digitally literate district. Kerala, due to its strong reading and library movement, has been at the top of every human development indicator in the nation, thus demonstrating a strong correlation between reading and human development. Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Reading Mission has gone completely digital, working closely with the National Digital Library of India, stimulating public library, and reading consciousness in the nation.



Jai Christ Community Library. Photo: provided by Priyanka Mohan.

It is envisaged that the nation will need to take a close look at the provision of public library services in India. Currently, the public library movement is largely plagued by the lack of funding for library infrastructure and the lack of building capacity among professional librarians who render services in each district, town, and village of India. With very limited scope towards attracting private funding, almost the entire nation is currently dependent on funding from the state. While two thirds of Indian states have enacted library acts guaranteeing public library services to each citizen, only a handful of states have had the foresight of introducing sustainable funding. This has led to limited success in the provision of public library services. Many states, despite having a library act as an instrument, are largely dependent on meager allocation made



Anna Centenary Library. Photo: provided by Priyanka Mohan.

available by the state-level apex bodies and the matching grant from RRRLF. It is stated that the national per capita spending on libraries is less than USD 0.10 in India.

Recommendations of Indian Public Library Movement (IPLM)

A three-member committee, under the chairmanship of Dr Basheerhamad Shadrach with Mr P Jayarajan and Dr H K Kaul as members, drafted and released the following recommendations for the improvement of public library services in the nation in the year 2015. These recommendations emerged out of the first ever Public Library Multi-

stakeholder event called the Indian Public Library Conference (IPLC) held in Delhi on 17-19 March in the same year. If the stakeholders of Indian Public Libraries would pay some attention to the following recommendations, the library movement will witness a dramatic change and a make-over in the nation.

1. **Public libraries in India should make every effort to conform to the guidelines prescribed by IFLA/ UNESCO in their public library manifesto**
2. **Model public library act/ guidelines should be developed.**
3. **The apex body, Raja Rammohun Roy library foundation, requires to be remodelled and reshaped with multistakeholders engaged in the process**
4. **An India public library fund (iplf) should be created to make way for funding support from public and private sources.**
5. **An India public library association/council (ipla/c) requires to be formed.**
6. **A high profile national level public library, as well as reading habits, promotion campaign should be launched.**
7. **Community needs and aspirations should form the basis of service/ collection development in any public library; hence, a blend of centralized/ decentralized procurement strategies should be encouraged.**

8. **Refurbishment of public libraries should be carried out throughout the nation on a priority basis.**
9. **All public libraries should offer free Wi-Fi and internet access and all relevant web resources.**
10. **State governments should make provisions to organize regular training programmes to equip library professionals with the right skills, knowledge and attitude for the future.**

These recommendations were specified into 56 more operational goals.

Conclusion

The golden period of Indian Libraries in the ancient times of fifth Century to 1200 AD had its own ending only to find a 12 year old boy some seven centuries later who became not only a king but a reformer and certainly one who founded one of the modern public library movements in the nation. Thanks to the Christian missionaries who democratized education; plus the efforts of dr. S.R. Ranganathan until his death in 1972, we saw the re-emergence of the golden period, especially in the annals of the history of Indian Public Library Movement. While there have been many major movements in India, the arrival of the Indian Public Library Movement offered the much-needed hope to the Indian Public Library fraternity in recent years. However, due to further support, the Indian Public Library Movement awaits a special effort by multi-stakeholders to implement a new policy. If only we sustain IPLM and advocate for rejuvenating public libraries, and take the existing and future libraries as ones that will be steered by multi-stakeholders with a strong involvement from private philanthropies and citizens' participation, we can witness the re-emergence of the golden period the third time round in the history of Indian libraries.

About the authors

Erik Boekesteijn is a senior advisor of innovation at the national Royal Library (KB) of the Netherlands. In addition, he is member of the Board of Directors at StoryHouse in Chester and Fellow to the University of Syracuse. He is co-owner of the publishing house Steijn&Tonijn. As the owner of Shanachie Media, he introduced best practices on a global scale by means of, amongst others, the video production This Week in Libraries.

Jos Debeij is head of the department Public Libraries at the national Royal Library of the Netherlands. He is a former director of the public library in Deventer and was a board member of the Netherlands Association of Public Libraries. From 2001 till 2006 he was the managing consultant of the ICT expertise centre Laurens. In 2015-2019 he was member of IFLA's standing committee for public libraries.



Building Better Libraries Together – State of the Art in Dutch Libraries

by Erik Boekesteijn, Jos Debeij and Eimer Wieldraaijer (the Netherlands)

Between these two Dutch librarians, there is tons of experience and knowledge concerning libraries and library services in the Netherlands and beyond. Hence, who better than Erik Boekesteijn and Jos Debeij to talk to and shine a light on what's going on behind the dunes of the North Sea and to juxtapose the state of the art in Dutch libraries in relation to world developments in the library field. Ever so befitting, our conversation took place as close to the Dutch border as one might get, within walking distance of the German and Belgian border. For six months now, Jos Debeij is once again living amidst the gently sloping corn fields of Limburg, not far from where he was born. As a cycling enthusiast, Jos tastefully reminisces about the past, talking about the times when his parents' neighbours had the incredible privilege to – more than once – shelter the living legend Eddy Merckx, who would shower right next to his house after finishing the race. It was right then and there, in Holland's most Burgundian province, that his love for cycling sprouted simultaneously with his love for telling stories that tickle the imagination.

On one of the hottest days of the year, another passionate storyteller joins Jos at his table amidst the riches of trees and natural shade of beautiful Schimmert. Like Jos, Erik Boekesteijn is a big fan of music, theatre, and stories. He expresses this love vehemently with simultaneous words and gestures. As I watch him, I am convinced that his name must be stated somewhere in the dictionary entry of the word 'extrovert'. Erik exudes a certain joy-de-vivre, and he has been fascinated his whole life by the ways in which culture brings people together. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise to me when Erik says that his job as a senior advisor at the innovation department of the Royal Library in The Hague is 'the best job in the world'.

What characterizes Dutch public libraries?

Jos: 'Local libraries are responsible for their own policies, but they are supported by national and provincial layers. For instance, over the last few years provincial service organisations have increasingly been focussing on facility management such as ICT, HRM,



Bibliotheek Leeuwarden, the Netherlands.

transport and logistics. At the same time, these provincial service organisations are deeply rooted in and have substantive expertise of the daily working procedures at the local libraries.

Therefore, these provincial organisations (POI's) can make valuable contributions regarding developing and implementing services that, in turn, support the national programmes that are directed at social tasks. Think of, for instance, developing basic skills like reading and digital inclusion.

In other words: thanks to the POI's we are capable of tackling certain aspects of societal development by making full usage of a supporting network that provides programmes such as 'Boekstart' and the 'Bibliotheek op school' (see notes). The latter are national building blocks that, with the support of the provincial layer, can be designed locally without any further obligations.

Erik: 'The role that has been given to the Royal Library ever since the introduction of Wsob (library law system for public library services) in 2015, is pretty unique in the world. Personally, I do not know another example of a national library that is as intensely involved with public libraries, especially when it comes to creating and developing an infrastructure for the digital library. With that being said, I do not mean involvement in the sense of directing and steering. What we do is more like facilitating.'

Jos: 'The library law involves a directing responsibility of the Royal Library. However, a director cannot do a proper job without actors. The Royal Library is a director without a clapperboard. She facilitates and connects within the network. This makes me think of something the famous Dutch theatre director Ivo van Hove once said: 'Theatre is basically only a small fragment of life. But when we go on stage, we do want to make the best theatre in the world.' The same can be said for what we do. The library touches only upon a small part of people's lives. But we try for people to get the most out of the contact they have with us and our services.'

Has the reinstatement of the library law in 2015 given the Dutch public libraries an impulse?

Jos: 'Undoubtedly. The transition of the library from a lend-a-book facility to a broad spectrum societal-educational institution with no less than five core functions is thereby established by law. These five core functions are: (1) making knowledge and information available to the public; (2) providing possibilities for development and education; (3) promoting reading and getting people to read actual literature; (4) organising social meeting places and debates; (5) and finally to introduce people to art and culture. To put this differently: if, as

a library in 2020, you solely lend out books to members, you are less likely to stay relevant for people in our society. Besides that, the digital library – that started out as a voluntary development in Dutch libraries is now lawfully and financially embedded in our library structure. For an essential part, the future is digital. But note that this future is and must be connected to what is happening locally, in the daily lives of our citizens. It is specifically due to the recent multiformity of sources that the physical presence of the library (e.g. the building) is more important now than ever. People and information can come together in many ways. In today's library, students are studying, people from different backgrounds meet and connect, elderly people get help with filling out their tax forms. The process of connecting people and information touches our hearts, it is in our DNA. We did it before and we are doing it just as much now, but the guiding role of the librarian as an information agent has only increased in the digital era. Locally, the library is the platform on which individuals and partners find and strengthen each other'.

Erik: 'The law has enforced the basis underneath our right to be here. It has brought us some peace. Some of the slurs from local politicians: 'Is it really necessary that we give so much money to the library?' have reduced. Years ago, it was impossible to go to a congress without hearing a speaker wonder: 'Do people

really need libraries?' You do not hear this anymore. Mostly everyone considers the library to be a useful beacon in society. A familiar, safe place in your close surroundings where you meet and get inspired and acquainted with all sorts of things.'

Abroad, Dutch libraries are usually described as 'Entrepreneurially minded'. Is that connected to being independent foundations and not connected to the administrative municipal apparatus?

Jos: 'There is an upside and a downside to this. For instance, with the usual exception we know from Asterix and Obelix of that 'one small village in France', every library in the Netherlands participates in 'BoekStart'. Nevertheless, if somehow the arrival of immigrants in Malmö becomes an important issue that needs to be addressed, Sweden has a way more efficient network, more centralized, than we do. Do not forget that Dutch libraries still depend on local government funding for 85% of their income, against a mere 15% of their own revenue. On that note, given the current situation, it is important that Dutch libraries – with respect to addressing social needs – are careful and deliberate in shaping their entrepreneurship. The library in Venlo

immediately springs to mind because it received a substantial amount of extra money – we're talking tons – because they have managed to get it across to the city council that the library contributes in an unique and essential way to the city's welfare.'

Erik: 'A couple of years ago, DOK Delft Library took for their library concept a really good look at the way IKEA did business in Delft. The general thought was: what can we learn from this company? In the meantime, the way libraries look at market forces has changed. Currently, more and more libraries gravitate

towards the 'of by for all'-model by Nina Simon. This model basically entails: how can we pay more attention to what our users and potential users want? How can we invite them to work and program with us? Is there a demand for kids' summer camps? Well then, why not organise such a thing with them? This way of thinking does put some libraries on the spot now that they allow themselves to look at so many options. Even though libraries should be there for everyone, it is financially not always realistic to serve everyone. Personally, I make it my business to avoid excluding people, because I think that is a risky path to tread upon. I think it's a concern that the "entrepreneur state of mind" focuses only on specific target groups and is therefore automatically in danger of losing sight of others.'

Dutch libraries are not for free and in comparison to the rest of the world quite expensive

Jos: 'It is true that the number of members has declined from 33% to 25% of the population in the last 245 years. With that said, it has less to do with our rates than it has with certain social developments such as the increasing popularity of the internet, apps, and devices such as phones, tablets etcetera. It turns out that the quality of service is more important than its price. At the same time, we are aware of how essential is to adolescents



Nina Simon.

that the library is free of charge. When you put a price tag on library services, this really seems to put them off. This is a current issue, because the government wants to provide adolescents and young adults with an age up to 18 or even 25 years with a free membership.

Erik: 'People in our country are currently trying to figure out if it is possible to make the library "free of charge". Then again, nothing in life is free. Even abroad there is no such thing as a free library membership. Money must come from somewhere because costs are always being made. Here is an example. In order to survive, the Storyhouse in Chester, UK, has introduced tuition. This way, it is members experience what you might call a "shared ownership", which is not necessarily a bad thing. On the contrary: when people see the value of a product or a service, they are willing to pay for it. This is the case in Chester, because now the members feel as if they are the shareholders of an awesome initiative. An initiative that, mind you, should always be available to everyone at all times.'

Jos: 'To be of value to all the different groups in our society, that's the most important point of this whole discussion.'

Erik: 'Imagine the twenty members of the Rotary Club coming up to the library with the following request: "Here's a stack of money,

provided that your institution is exclusively ours for a week." As a library, we would say: "We welcome your money, but we kindly decline your offer. You can programme with us only if it adds value to society."

Jos: 'When a library offers working spots without any further attachment to its sources, is it still a library?'

Jos: 'The switch to demand-orientated thinking and working has also been reflected in the library law. The five core functions indicate that you must make sure, by looking at a broad spectre, that you always take societal needs into consideration. In line with this, the government wants to gain more insight into the impact we have on society. But this impact is very difficult to measure and to point out. At this point, I would like to address the three government layers of the library sector that I mentioned earlier. Between them a covenant is prepared in which they declare that they will focus on basic skills; the promotion of reading; lifelong learning, and that their services are set on language development and participation in the age of information, in which digital inclusion plays a major part.. All parties declare in unison: these are the themes that we will address. It's what we are doing already now, but we are going to intensify the energy that is put into this, in order to create a bigger impact.'



School 7 in Den Helder, the Netherlands.

Isn't there a risk that every problem in our society will be dumped on the library's doorstep?

Erik: 'The common denominator in everything the library does, is the promoting of social inclusion, digital inclusion and lifelong learning.'

Jos: 'There are around 17 million people living here in the Netherlands. Research has shown that a quarter of the adolescents do not have an acceptable proficiency in language and internet skills. We are talking about substantial numbers here. The gap between the haves and the have nots is getting bigger. To narrow this gap, the library – together with other partners – is really putting its shoulder to the wheel. What I really like about the Netherlands, is that it's a collaborative effort to get this huge task done. We have our network to make this possible. Fortunately, the government and national partners acknowledge this. Whether it's the Tax Authorities or the Legal Aid Office, they both approach us when they need a hand in reaching out to people who have trouble with filling out their forms or who don't know where they can get first hand legal aid. Many organisations want to be closer to the citizens, and who better than the library to help them to achieve this goal? The library has always been prominent in problem solving. What exactly

is your problem and how may I assist you in finding the information you need? Based on this, I believe very strongly in the future of the librarian.'

There is no such thing as library studies anymore in the Netherlands.

Jos: 'That's indeed a fact. In that sense, we have invested insufficiently in the quality of the information specialist. To take back what we lost there, we can gain some momentum by introducing a minor at college level. We are also going to aim at educating employees to become "teacher librarians", "community information officers" and "community librarians".' Erik: 'These Corona times compelled us to really get to work on the online programming. The offering of modular educational programs via an online library campus platform has proven to be successful here and has drawn interest even from outside the Netherlands. We are open to international collaborations. After all, the Netherlands is but a small country always looking over its own borders.'

Jos: 'As our famous fellow countryman Johan Crujff once said: "Every disadvantage has an advantage." Because we do not have a curriculum anymore, there is no educational programme that is set in stone; we are free to head in an entirely new direction.'

The hybrid library is on the rise in many countries; different organizations sharing multi-functional buildings or merging into one single organisation.

Erik: 'Most questions that land on my desk are about the following: how can we with our partners become a single institution that programmes together; that gives shape to the "third-place-thought"; that evolves into a stimulating place where people can learn and satisfy their curiosity, etcetera? The trend of becoming a hybrid organisation within a multifunctional building is indeed undeniable. We have got some great examples in the Netherlands (see notes).'

Jos: 'This joining of forces is exactly what is needed to become a dynamic organisation that can programme in the "of by for all"-spirit together with civilians and partners to meet all the societal and cultural demands.'

Erik: 'The realisation of hybrid libraries or institutions does not only happen on a large scale in big municipalities, as is proven by CulturA&Zo which is Nootdorp's - a municipality of 19.000 inhabitants - cultural and social hub. CulturA&Zo is based on the StoryHouse (model) in Chester, UK.'

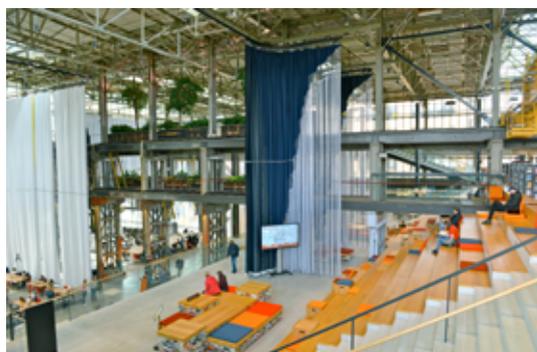
Besides CulturA&Zo other great examples are Rozet in Arnhem and Forum in Groningen, must visit places on your next tour in the Netherlands.

In many big cities iconic libraries emerge, yet in rural areas they are closing.

Jos: 'All over the world we see people moving away from the countryside. Young people are moving to the cities. In rural areas they are closing. However, this is partly true. The Kulturhus-development that has been brought to life twenty years ago continues to this day. Erik mentioned Nootdorp before, and there are many other examples of libraries that are still fighting the good fight. Think of community houses that aim for connection on various levels. In addition, there's the 'Library at school' that is really proving its worth in rural areas. The collections in these libraries in the small villages are not only open to school children but provide a library function to all.'

Apart from this and earlier mentioned national programs libraries start to develop programmes with other local organisations when they notice their local community has a certain need for something. These programs are made like the library collections would have been made in the past: independently, professionally, critically, and societally

engaged. An example is the project conducted by the public libraries of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht for supporting vulnerable elderly people by providing them with information and skills.'



LocHal in Tilburg, the Netherlands.

The broader, more extended function of libraries is becoming apparent in their names

Jos: 'I have become a member of the Centre Céramique in Maastricht. That name is on the frontside of the card I received, but on the back, it still says "library". This way, such a hybrid organisation can show its loyalty to the incorporated library.'

Erik: 'The library brand is making a comeback. For a while, we thought of changing the name in order for us to change the library's

image that it's only a place that lends out books. Currently we see that people are taken by the "new" image of the library and that the brand is as strong as ever.'

Jos: 'The building's function is more important than the building itself or its name. Nevertheless, when a building is designed professionally for specific purposes, this naturally adds to the building's function. This is the case for the LocHal in Tilburg, the Forum in Groningen and in several places throughout the country. Because these buildings are now here, we are developing a digital library atlas of the Netherlands, which shows to what extent our country has invested in the functional library of the future. In this atlas you will find buildings in small villages, medium sized towns or in the big city's Palaces of the People, to use a phrase by the famous Dutch architect Francine Houben.'

Have famous architects such as Francine Houben, Rem Koolhaas and Winy Maas contributed to the new positioning of the Dutch library?

Jos: 'These Dutch architects envisioned the possibilities and functions for the new library and they expressed that vision in the way they designed their buildings.'



Erik: 'Touching upon this, let's not forget about champs like Jan-David Hanrath and Aat Vos. Aat especially, because he was the first person to ask library members about the way they envisioned the interior design and decoration of libraries.'

Jos: 'Architects have contributed to people's belief in the revival of the library as a fun place to be. In this respect, we must also mention Jo Coenen, who not only designed Centre Céramique in Maastricht, but also the popular Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam (OBA) Adapting to changes is a characteristic of modern libraries as well, you see.'

Erik: 'Speaking of changes, also think of the FabLabs, the makerspaces and other novelties that have found their way to many Dutch libraries. It all started with simply installing a 3D-printer and a 'laser cutter', and now supervisors are often led by educational programs of schools and other partners. Fun gadgets are often used to attract young people and are associated with themes such as sustainable-thinking within the Sustainable Development Goals.'

Jos: 'Here too, libraries operate with the same intention of being a strong partner in tackling societal issues that need to be addressed. The forerunners in the field learn from their experiences and, in turn, share

their experiences so that knowledge can be used as building blocks somewhere else in the country. Library staff is not stereotypically known for being innovative, but this does not rule out there can be enlightened spirits. The true power of library employees is that they are excellent adapters. For instance, the library Rivierenland has introduced the "BoekStart"-coach in Tiel and its surroundings. This is an initiative that soon had its followers here and there. Whatever works is quickly adapted. In this case, once again, I point out how significant the role of provincial supporting institutions is.'

Erik: 'The same process is taking place in the project "Scoor een boek!" that is led by Jolanda Robben; a super librarian from Groningen. She had the brilliant idea to use professional soccer players to get boys to read. This initiative is now taken up throughout the country. Our library sector consists of so many passionate employees who are really out there upgrading the library's image. For example, take Marjolijn Hordijk from Nijmegen. She organizes sleep overs and "poetry slams" in the library. Also, her show "Sterke mannen, sterke verhalen" (bold man, bold stories) is featured at the Zwarte Cross-festival (a biker festival in the Netherlands).' **Jos:** 'Dutch people are also known to be merchants. When they see a well-functioning and cheaper product elsewhere, they quickly pick up on that.'

Erik: 'There's a real upside to this wilfulness. There is no fear of experimenting and people never stop being curious.'

Where will our libraries be in the next three years?

Jos: 'In collaboration with schools and teaching programs, a significant next step will be made regarding language skills and reading. Solid alliances will have been made within the reading programme with respect to supporting promotion initiatives that aim at reducing the (current) backlog. I am talking about language developments by means of reading, or through audio books and the usage of other digital devices and services. In three years, major steps will have been taken in the field of programming together with the community. The "of by for all"-approach will have manifested through the exertions of the "community librarians". We will embrace vulnerable groups more forcefully to equip them with more skills by using forms of informal learning. We will do our very best to stop people from drowning in the tsunami of information brought about by digital transformation. How will we do this, you ask? The answer is: by connecting people to sources that are relevant to them.'

Erik: 'The road ahead is full of opportunities...'

Erik: 'By providing people with validated information, you almost automatically take a stand. This provision of valid information is the library's main task.'

Jos: 'To take a stand does not entail that you opt for the one or the other. It entails that you would use information that is reliable and pluriform. In addition, it requires you to reduce illiteracy, to fight against poverty and to integrate newcomers. Library director Peter Kok (from Tilburg) said: "We bring those who are left behind to the front of the line."'

Erik: 'A wonderful statement with which I fully agree.'

Jos: 'Yes, but that's not even the whole story. A healthy society offers a perfect ground to sprout talent. What we do not want at all is to get only B's and C's on our report. Yes, it is important to help the one who is left behind to come up to speed again. However, at the same time it's important that the frontrunners' talents can also flourish.'

Reading a book together – showing pictures and telling stories – this strengthens the bond between you and your baby. Children that have been read to as babies are more likely to be better at language use. You cannot start reading to your child soon enough. This is the thought that cradled 'BoekStart': a programme that enables children from age 0 to 4 and their parents to enjoy books together.

'Scor een Boek!' is a reading project for students from 4th and 5th grade, elementary level. The project combines reading with soccer: while being cheered on by two professional soccer players, students try to read as many books as possible over the course of ten weeks.

The library, schools and the municipality are joining forces with 'Bibliotheek op school' in order to promote daily attention to how much fun reading can be and provide media studies at school and at home. The goal is to stimulate children and young adults to read more and to teach them how to use the internet, social media and games with more efficiency and caution.

The libraries support elementary schools, secondary schools, and high schools to achieve these goals by offering professional reading-/media consultants, inspiring books and with a proficient digital reading- and learning environment.



Score a Book! Photo: Jolanda Robben.



Children's department Neude Library Utrecht.



Groningen Public Library in the 'pyramid' of Groninger Forum.

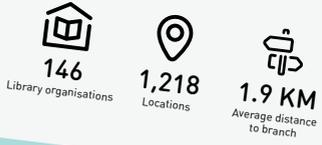
The Netherlands can rejoice in many recently opened libraries. The most recent addition is the central public library in Utrecht, which is in the monumental building of the former post office at Neude. It is a 'Gesamtkunstwerk', where architecture and art merge in the main hall and where the whole city wants to deliver in cooperative programs in this unique building. With two café's and a cinema and theatre it features the facilities of the library of today.

By the end of 2019, 'Forum Groningen' came into the light. This striking building is 45 meters tall. It stands out against the historical city center like a modern monolith, with its sharp lines, ten stories and a rooftop terrace. The building consists of two 'towers' at the east- and westside that are connected through criss-cross escalators. Both towers have parts that are closed off and open squares. In the closed off parts you will find the exposition rooms, movie theatres, a multifunctional hall and Storyworld.

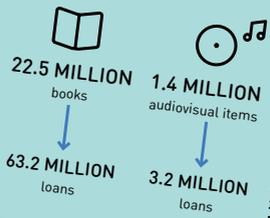
The main establishment of Bibliotheek Midden-Brabant in Tilburg is found in LocHal, a place where they used to restore locomotives. Bibliotheek Midden-Brabant harbours an establishment of Seats2meet and Kunstloc Brabant. The transformation from an industrial working place to a cultural hotspot was highly praised in learned tabloids and trade magazines. The LocHal too received several awards, like the prestigious title of 'World's Building of the Year'.

'School 7' (Den Helder) received an even more elusive award when they were proclaimed Best Library in the World at the IFLA-congress that was held in 2018. The members of the jury were noticeably impressed by the way in which the library cooperated with local partners. In addition, they praised the library's exceptional architecture and interior decoration.

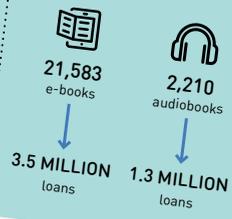
Public libraries in the Netherlands (2018)



PHYSICAL COLLECTION



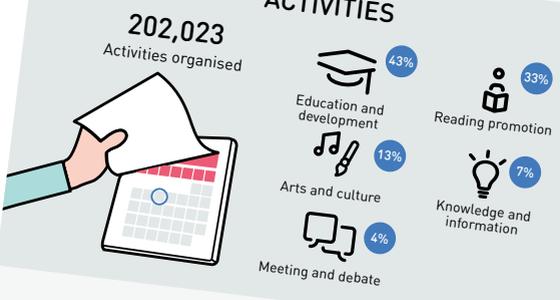
DIGITAL COLLECTION



VISITORS



ACTIVITIES



STAFF



KB | nationale bibliotheek

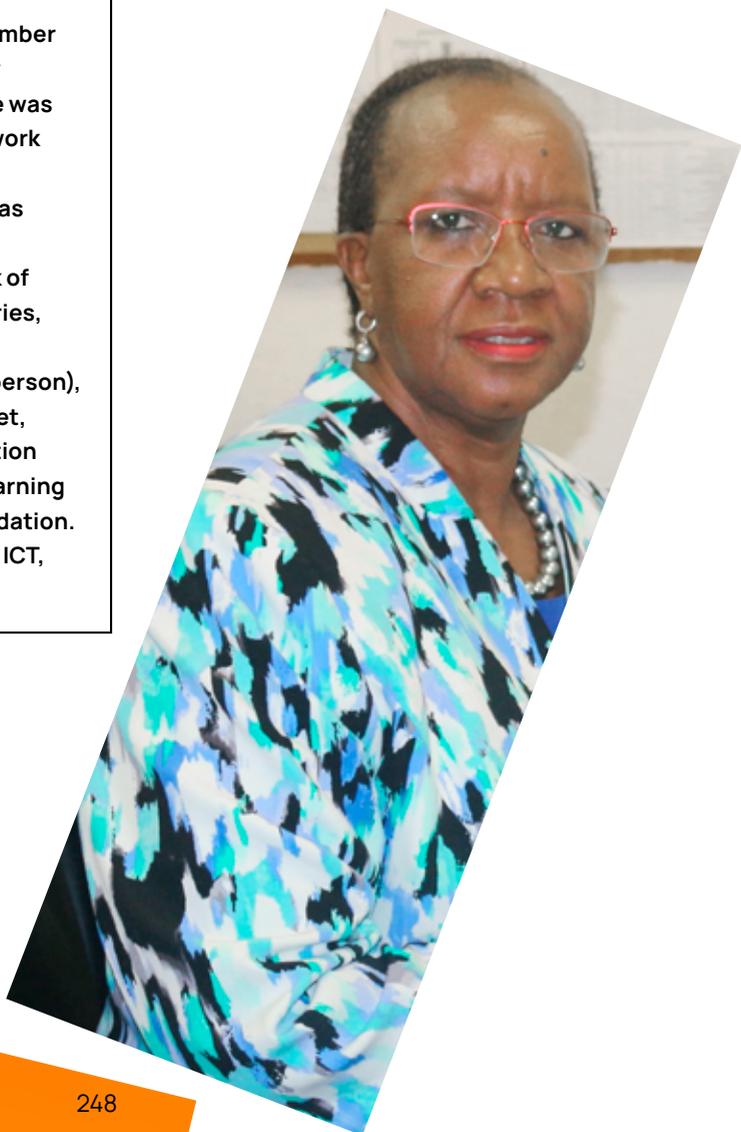
Reference: www.bibliotheekinzicht.nl/bibliotheekstatistiek

Text: Eimer Wieldraaijer
Photos: Eimer Wieldraaijer, Gerrit Serné, Marcel Krijgsman, Biblionet Groningen, Forum Groningen. Translation: Nicky Boekesteijn.

About the author

Buhle Mbambo-Thata is the University Librarian of the National University of Lesotho. Prior to that she was the Director- Resources Development of the African Library and Information Association and Institutions (AfLIA). She previously served as Executive Director of Library Services at the University of South Africa from 2006 until December 2016. She served as University Librarian at the University of Zimbabwe from 2001 until 2006. She is member of the Board of Directors of the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) and African Journals Online (AJOL).

Buhle has served as Governing Board member of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). She was a member of the Strategic Advisory Network of the Global Libraries Programme of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. She has previously served on various committee affiliations including the Library Network of the Association of Commonwealth Libraries, the E-Knowledge Society for Women in Southern Africa (of which she was chairperson), the advisory committees of EIFL Found.net, 2004-2007; the Gender in Africa Information Network 1996-2001 and the Access to Learning Award of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Her research interests are in women and ICT, ICT applications in libraries.



What is Trending in Libraries in Selected Regions of Africa?

by Buhle Mbambo-Thata (Lesotho)

The answer to the question 'what is trending in Africa?' is simple. It is 'Africa's youth.' Because of its youthful population Africa is sometimes referred to as the young continent. Such a description is based on that 60 % of Africa's population is below the age of 50. CarlosLopes states that: 'Population dynamics in Africa are more than challenges, as they also provide opportunities for the realization of the vision of the "Future we want for Africa".' Africa's youthful population presents an opportunity for social and economic development. It stands to reason then, that an investment in Africa's youth is an investment into 'The future we want'!

In the library sector, the youthfulness of Africa has been reflected in both library programming and in continuing professional development. This contribution discusses the work of selected national libraries in Africa that have invested in programs that develop the youth. It further offers a glimpse into the rare collections of these libraries. The collections have been preserved for the future generations. This contribution deals with two cases in which libraries have distinguished themselves as 'souls of the nation' by preserving a national record while also reaching out to communities to meet national development needs: the Kenya National Library service and the National Library of South Africa.

National Libraries as Development Agents

In Africa there are two types of institutions that fulfill a national library function: the 'National Library' and the 'National Library Services'. Their mandates are outlined in the legislation that established them. The 'National Library' has the role of keeping and preserving the national historical record, administering ISBN and producing the national bibliography, promoting reading and literacy, and research. The 'National Library Services' has both the traditional national library role (preserving the national record, creating the national bibliography, promoting reading) and the development and management of the national public library service.

In Botswana, Swaziland and Kenya there is a National Library Service. In Lesotho the State Library has an archiving, national library and a leadership role regarding public in libraries. In South Africa, the National Library of South Africa has a traditional national library role, but its public access and leadership mandate extends its role to lead library developments as well. The National

- 1 **Lopes, Carlos** (2016) 'Foreword' in 'The Demographic profile of African countries'. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Addis Ababa
- 2 **Kibera Library** (2020) African story [↗knl.s.ke](#)
- 3 **Nakuru Library** (2020) [↗knl.ac.ke](#)

Library of South Africa and the National Library of Nigeria are not national library services per se. They do, however, play leadership roles in the development of the library and information sector in their respective countries. The National Library of South Africa plays a critical leadership role in the development of the library sector in South Africa. It serves as a focal point for national development, while also maintaining the traditional role as a national library; preserving the national record, promoting knowledge development and reading, and leading the sector.

Africa's national libraries and national library services have rallied around the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030, and focused on the aspiration of not leaving anyone behind, as the 17 goals are implemented. African libraries have forged an alignment between the Africa 2063 Agenda, 'the Africa we want' and the UN SDG 2030 Agenda for Development. They have further aligned these to the national development agendas; to make the work of libraries a national imperative. This has helped to entrench libraries as centers of development. In the following a snap shot will be given of two libraries: the Kenya National Library Service and the National Library of South Africa, how they support youth and preserve collections for future generations.

Case Study 1: Kenya National Library Service

The Kenya Library Services (KNLS) headquarter is in Nairobi, in the newly completed Kenya National Library building. KNLS has 64 branches distributed in 33 out of 47 counties across the country, including in Nairobi's largest informal settlement: Kibera. KNLS was established in 1965 through an act of Parliament, with a dual role of the National Library and the Public Library functions. However, schedule 4 part 2 (4) of the constitution of Kenya 2010, devolved the functions of public library service to the county governments. The Parliament of Kenya is in the process of enacting the Kenya National Library Service Bill 2019 that will distinguish and separate the functions of the National Library of Kenya.

This case study will report on library interventions of two branch libraries: the Nakuru and the Kibera during Covid-19.^{2,3} The two libraries have a history of services for the youth and have continued attracting partners to support the various empowerment programs in the libraries. The libraries have developed a strong culture of working with stakeholders and have become a benchmark for other branch libraries. Since the outbreak



Harare Public Library, Capetown. Photo: Ton van Vlimmeren.

of Covid -19 which led to closure of all libraries, the two branches have excelled through innovative services for the youth. Their work further demonstrates the commitment of KNLS in investing in Kenya's asset, its youth.

While libraries are more than buildings, purpose built libraries are essential. They reflect the national aspiration about libraries. The newly completed KNLS building is inspirational.

The KNLS building project had been years in the making under the leadership of Richard Atuti and his team at KNLS. The library was completed in July 2020. The new National Library of Kenya building is a flagship project of Kenya's Vision 2030. The building concept was inspired by the traditional drum and the African shield. The library complex has a total floor area of 23,500m². The building's interior and exterior

make use of African motifs, figures and color schemes which enhance its cultural inspiration and function. The building interior was shaped by the idea of creating a social space, a concept which deviates from the traditional stark concept of the library being a place for reading only. The library has endeavored to create social spaces such as meeting spaces (auditoria, theatres, meeting rooms for group discussions), restaurants/café's, open green spaces (internal and external), and has also changed the interior character by making the spaces more visually interactive to match the general design concept.

The building enhances Vision 2030's focus on making Kenya more competitive through creation of a knowledge-driven economy. The Vision outlines the library as a key component of youth empowerment



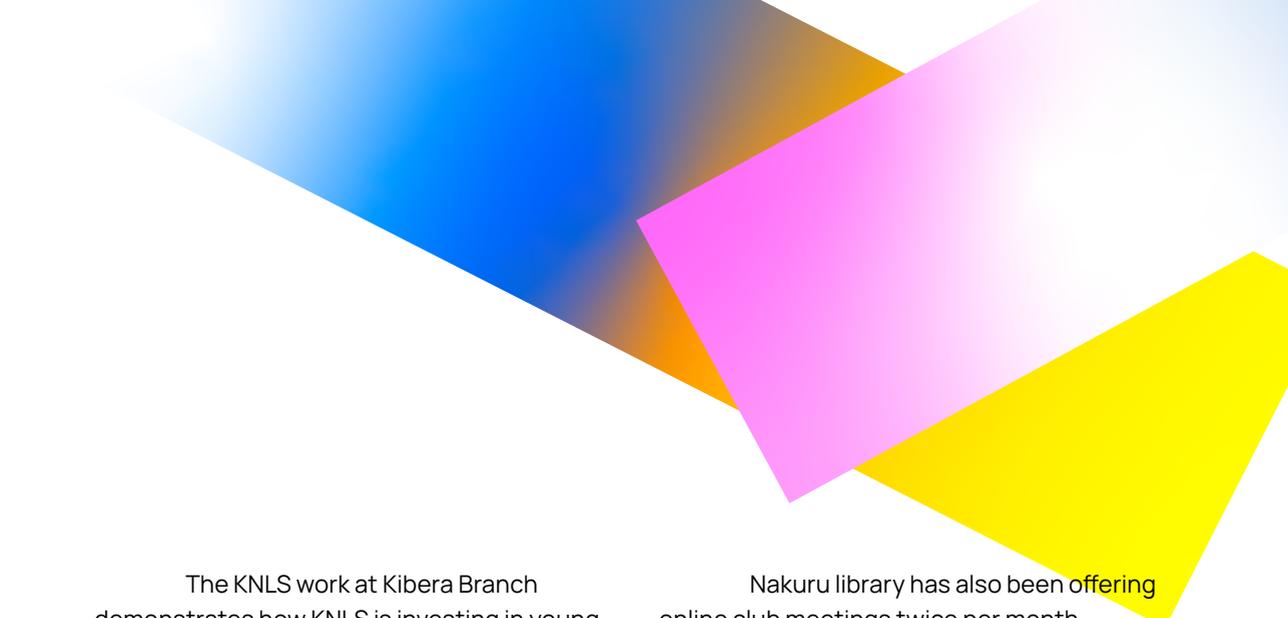
Capetown Central Library, Childrens Department.
Photo: Ton van Vlimmeren.

and values the pivotal role of information in harmonizing the three strategic pillars: the economic, social and political pillars. The constitution of Kenya recognizes libraries as vehicles to disseminate culture and information.

KNLS Vision includes allowance for digital spaces at the recently completed building. However, the work of reaching the communities is done through a network of libraries. The KNLS branches are the main conduit for reaching and impacting communities. As stated earlier this contribution highlights how two branches libraries continued to serve communities and invested in youth despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

Kibera Community Library has been creating a reading culture through a mass reading program: ASB storybooks project for children. The project teaches reading for fun while reading stories in groups, trains children to create their own stories, and encourages children to tell others about the stories. In Kenya, the schools and libraries closed in March 2020 in response to Covid-19. During the lock down, children from economically deprived environments, whose parent could not afford internet and therefore access to online learning could not access online learning nor reading materials. The Kibera Library Librarian, Mary Kinyanjui, mobilized secondhand smartphones from friends. Her team downloaded the ASB Reader App on each phone/tablet for children. These phones are then loaned to children between 6-13 to read at home: 'Mary Kinyanjui states: Before issuing the devices, parents and children are trained on how to use the ASB Reader App. The devices are secured with parental Control software. We have enabled children in about 22 households with an average of 6 children to have access to stories, revision papers, educational games and curriculum-aligned subject content.'¹⁴

Children below 6 years, not familiar with smart phones, get a different service through print outs of the ASB stories for parent/guardians to read with them at home. By 28 July 2020, 250 children had been reached.



The KNLS work at Kibera Branch demonstrates how KNLS is investing in young people regardless of economic background. It is breaking access to content, regardless of the digital divide. The Nakuru Branch, under the leadership of Purity Kavuri, continued during Covid its information provision virtually. With a focus on services for young people and learners, the library marketed its e-learning resources provision, on social media and invited users to use the online-library. The poster below was placed on most social media platforms:

Such services demonstrate that libraries are not about books and buildings, but rather about services and reaching users. For example, the usage statistics for Encyclopedia Britannica online as of 30th June 2020 were recorded as follows: 512 individual sessions of 15+ minutes on the site; 72,618 hits (measured by clicks made on the site); 661 items downloaded on the site; 3,088 searches made on site. The above statistics from only one database are a clear indication that users found the e-resources as a better option during the Covid-19 library closure. The library took its investment in young people further and offered personal development via Zoom. This was a critical service considering that Covid-19 affected people's mental health, it was critical in the sense that a community service as the library continued to speak about personal well-being.

Nakuru library has also been offering online club meetings twice per month, targeting the youth with the aim of helping them to improve their public speaking skills and leadership skills. The youths involved in the club admit having gained new skills that will help them in their day to day life even as a majority of them aspire to take up political positions in the county government. The club is registered under the Toastmasters club international under the name 'knls Nakuru toastmasters club'. The KNLS branches are the vehicle for delivery on Kenya's 2030 Vision for an informed nation. The work of the two branches also demonstrate KNLS's commitment to the youth, as well as a sterling contribution to the Africa we want.

The rare books collection is housed in the National Library Division. Some are quite old and with very delicate paper. During 2019/2020 stock taking exercise the print collection posted a stock of five thousand books. Most of the books in the collection date back to the 18th century. They are mostly published in Britain, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The collection covers the pre and post-colonial period. Books published in Kenya cover among others Kenyan culture, origin of Swahili language, slave trade in East Africa, colonization and struggle for independence and the building of the Kenya Uganda Railway. The collection is highly used for research. To ensure the collection is well

preserved, the collection is housed in a bulky filler which is located in the National Reference of the library. The collection is in open access for researchers. To ensure, the longevity of usage the library is in the process of digitizing the entire rare collection and ensure access through the virtual library. It is anticipated that they will benefit Kenya and beyond. Special collections and rare books are treasures. They are particularly essential for recording our history and the national identity. It is the history in those collections that make KNLS a critical component of the soul of Kenya, with an important history to pass to the youth.

Case Study 2: The National Library of South Africa

The National Library of South Africa (NLSA) has two Campuses: one in Cape Town and another in Pretoria. The NLSA was established by an Act of Parliament: the 'National library of South Africa Act 92 of 1998'.⁵ It was formed by the amalgamation of the South African Library and the State Library. In 2018, the NLSA celebrated 200 years of existence. In South Africa, the provision of public library service is a local government function. However, the NLSA Act mandates the NLSA to play a leadership and coordination role in the

library and information sector. The leadership role that the NLSA plays regarding provincial library services includes, administration of the conditional grant from government, as well as the coordination of work related to the Mzansi Libraries On-Line (MLO) Project, a project that was a partnership between the Government of South Africa and the Global Libraries Program of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

It is impossible in this contribution to feature all of the programs of the NLSA that impact communities. However, the highlight in the most recent years has been two graduate programs focused on empowering young graduates with skills. The NLSA's Internship Programs empower, up skill and develop unemployed youth in South Africa. The youth development program is targeted at young graduates with little or no work-experience. These youth are then attached to libraries. This supports skill development and the advancement of libraries as partners of economic development and emancipation. Social capital is achieved through lifelong learning opportunities and an investment in building a knowledge economy.

The Internship programs supports the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, specifically goals 4.4, 4.7, 8.5, 8.6, 8.B, 10.2 on quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities; promote sustained,



National Library of South Africa, Cape Town Campus.

inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; and reduce inequality within and among countries. They are also aligned to the African Union Agenda 2063 'the Africa we want', aspiration 1: a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development. The NLSA's ICT Internship Program was conceptualized and implemented to advance access to information through technology in public libraries. Through the Program, unemployed ICT graduates are recruited and trained to provide ICT support throughout the country in public libraries, provincial and district offices. The ICT Interns assist the Librarians to better serve the information needs of the

community. The Interns also provide free computer training to the library staff, library users and the greater community and assist the provincial and district offices with setting up and maintaining servers, setting up new offices and public libraries. To date 465 young people have been part of this program. Some of the Interns have secured permanent employment. The success and impact of the program have resulted in additional stakeholders being confirmed as co-funders of the program.

The NLSA's Graduate Development Program (GDP) recruits LIS university graduates with little or no work experience. These youths are exposed to intense on-the-job



National Library of South Africa, Pretoria Campus.

training mixed with external courses, talks, presentations and mentorship which enable them to gain key competencies needed to work in various environments. The continual evolution in the way in which communities find, understand, use and create information and knowledge, places a demand on current librarianship practices, knowledge and skills to also evolve. The GDP strives to create a future librarian with the cross disciplinary skills, understanding and knowledge to meet this demand and to ensure the profession stays relevant while ensuring a competitive base of professional human resources.

The National Library of South Africa's Special Collections is a treasure chest of documentary heritage. The collections include not only the South African collections but also other countries with a shared colonial

history, like Namibia and Zimbabwe. The collections consist of photographs, paintings, manuscripts, maps and pamphlets. Donations are one of the ways by which the NLSA builds its collections. For example, the NLSA received a large donation of manuscript material, which has been named the *South African Communist Party Collection*. This collection contains a wide variety of material relating to the SA Communist Party, Fascism and anti-apartheid materials. The collection is noteworthy to have also hundreds of flyers and small posters, including notices of political meetings and anti-apartheid messages. Some collections are listed in the UNESCO's Memory of the World Register. For example, the papers of W.H.I. Bleek, a German theologian, philologist and cataloguer of the Grey Collection. The *Bleek Collection* has three components lodged at three sites, namely the Cape Town Campus



This ambrotype of Nongqawuse and Nonkosi taken by Michael Henry Durney circa 1858 could be the only photograph of the two Xhosa prophets. Photo: National Library of South Africa Special collections.

of the NLSA, the Manuscripts and Archives Library of the University of Cape Town (UCT) and Iziko Museums. This collection is a rich source for African languages research. Some of the collection include early photographs of missionaries. These include works of early interaction of indigenous South Africans with missionaries. One of the earliest photographs included is that of the Xhosa Prophets Nongawuse and Nonkosi who had spiritual influence in the area now known as the Eastern Cape in the 19th Century.

The NLSA's Special Collections, particularly its rare books, manuscripts, iconographic material, and maps are digitized to be available online. This will assist researchers and youth to learn about their past, 'lest we forget!'

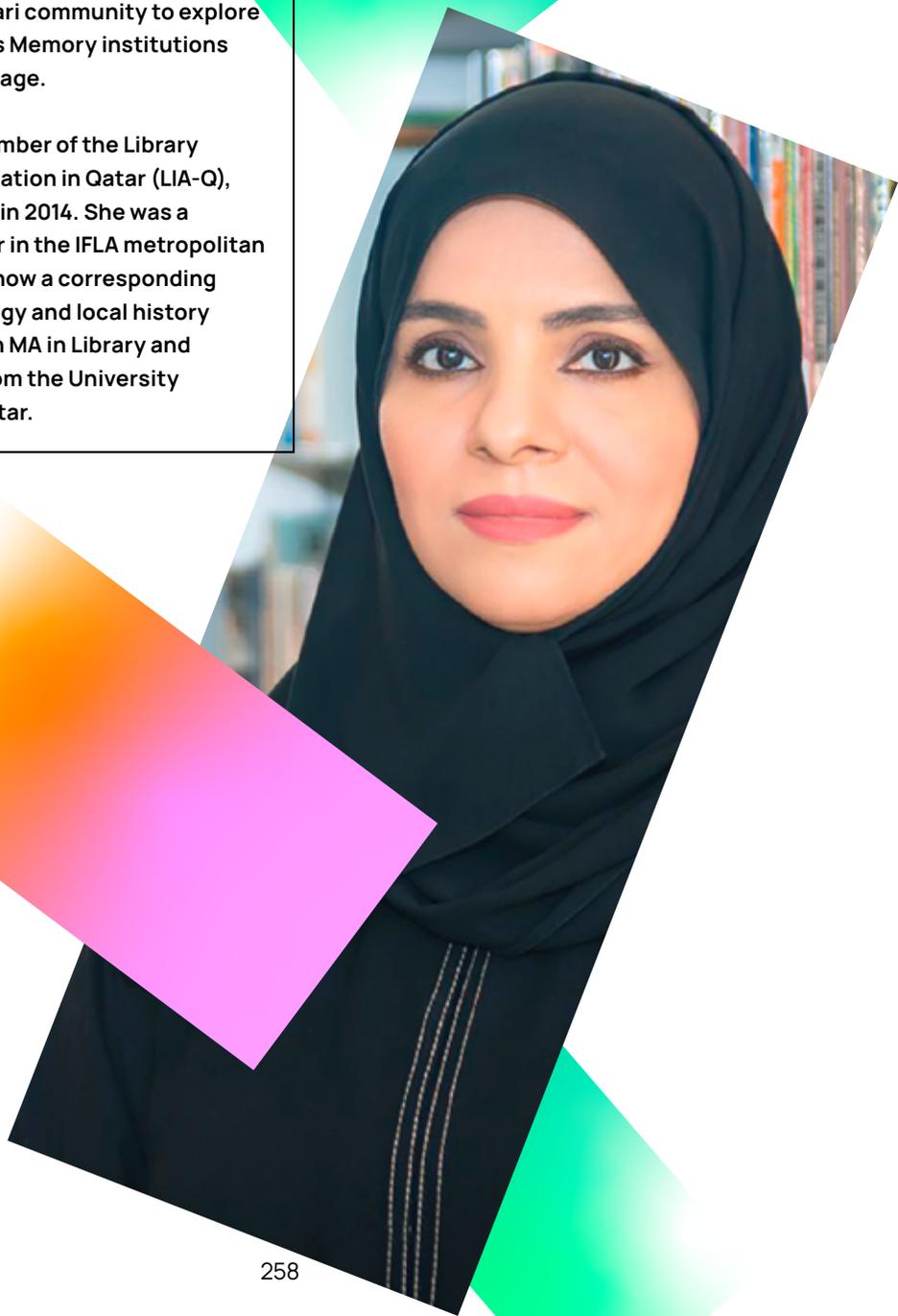
Conclusion

Africa's libraries have remained committed to the ideal that the Africa Union Agenda 2063 and the UN SDG 2030 will provide a critical framework for their development. Both the agendas are inspirational and are keeping the continent's libraries energized to provide services to its youth, as they deliver on the aspirations of both agendas. The KNLS and NLSA have been outstanding proponents of the Africa we want as they have served both country and Africa as well. These two institutions, their leaders and teams, are great examples of how libraries in Africa are trending as agents of development.

About the author

Abeer S. Al-Kuwari currently works as director of Research and Learning Services at the newly established Qatar National Library (QNL). While overseeing the operations of Public Services at QNL, Abeer supported the start-up of the Children and Young Adults Library and the Community and Outreach Units. Now the focus of Abeer's work is on engaging library researchers in the Qatari community to explore archival and libraries as Memory institutions and documentary heritage.

Abeer is a founding member of the Library and Information Association in Qatar (LIA-Q), which was established in 2014. She was a corresponding member in the IFLA metropolitan section in 2016. She is now a corresponding member of the genealogy and local history section. Abeer holds an MA in Library and Information Studies from the University College of London – Qatar.



The Development of Libraries in Qatar

by Abeer S. Al-Kuwari
(Qatar)

Qatar's interest in libraries is not new; on the contrary, with the start of Qatar's modernization period- after the oil discovery 70 years ago, huge investments were brought into the creation of libraries. Dar Al Kutub (DAK) – which means the 'House of Books' – known as the first public library in the Arabian Gulf region was established in the early 1960s.¹ However, it was not the first library in Qatar, it was the third. At that time, libraries functioned mainly as a support for new schools, even when they were labeled as public libraries.² Services to the community like access to resources and reference books were available as well. In 1982, DAK was granted the legal depository rights to preserve the national publications in the country and started acting as the national library for the country.³

The Ministry of 'Maaref' (knowledge) Education provisioned all schools with a library since the start of formal education in Qatar in 1949. Pearl traders and tribal leaders founded several private libraries within their homes and majlis; a space within all Qatari houses to receive men guests. They allowed public to access their valuable books and, on some occasions, borrow them. Nowadays, we are able to witness an increasing interest by governmental and non-governmental institutions in having special libraries which host various profession and leisure topics. These practices supported Qatar's vision 2030

for the increase in its people moving towards its target for a knowledge-based economy.

The library sector in Qatar has witnessed significant developments in terms of facilities and services offered to the community during the last few years. This was apparent after Qatar Foundation – a private and non-for-profit entity in Qatar focusing on the advancement of education, research, and community – announced a new national library project in 2012. The main aim was to support the learning needs of the growing community. On November 7th, 2017, Qatar National Library building was finally opened to the public, and Qatar started boosting a spectacular building presenting a new concept of serving different users and drawing attraction to short-stay visitors.

This is How It Started

Dr. Mohammed Ramadan revealed in his book 'Qatar Masjids', that the early rulers of Qatar worked towards 'masjids', buildings considered huge – compared to the population size at that time – as early as 1878. One of these famous masjids of that time was called 'Abu Al-Qubeib', meaning the one with various domes. The construction of other important masjids followed rapidly. If you wonder how masjids are relevant in a discussion related to libraries,

- 1 **Maktabat Qaṭar al-Waṭaniyah, Lux, C, & Anṣārī, A.N.** (2012). Maktabat Qaṭar al-Waṭaniyah: 50 āman wa-mā ba'da. al-Dawḥah: Maktabat Qaṭar al-Waṭaniyah
- 2 **Sadeq, Mohamemd.** رطق ي ف أم يدق تاب تك م ل او م ي ل ع ل ال ن ع ت ا ح م ل
[Highlights of Education and Libraries in Qatar].
Doha: Al Rayyan Magazine, 2018
- 3 **Mustafa, N.** (2017). The National Library of Qatar.
Saarbrücken: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing.

allow me to briefly explain what the roles of masjids are. According to several historic references, they are mainly spaces designated for worship and spirituality. However, they are also significant centers for basic education, advanced religious teachings, debate, and exchange of philosophical perspectives. This role was well-maintained in masjids around the world as they greatly support learning and dissemination of religious information which aimed at enhancing people's knowledge and consequently practices.

and others found the light of knowledge in such masjids. An excellent example of a masjid that turned into a notable learning and education center, is the masjid of Karaouiyn which was expanded under the Abbasid rule to be the first university in the world in 859. An excellent and a living example of the undetachable link between masjids as learning spaces and knowledge in the history of Islamic civilization.

Qatar being a Muslim and Arab state followed a similar approach to enhance the literate movements and education of its people; a very small population in 1878. A substantial awareness led the ruler of Qatar Sheikh Jassim to provide education opportunities for this small population through the masjids. These consisted of small libraries which contained the 'mothers of books' in religion, Quran interpretation, sciences, Hadeeth of the Muslims Prophet, etc. His successors invested heavily in providing such learning venues as well. Sheikh Ali bin Abdulla for example has a huge interest in libraries and established several private libraries. He provided public access to these libraries and advocated for literacy and learning.



48th Metropolitan Libraries conference Qatar 2016.

Since the early years of the Islamic Caliphate – Umayyad, Abbasid, Andalusian and other Islamic rules – books of various disciplines found its way to masjids. Philosophers, scholars, and young students regularly met in the masjids to share new knowledge, debate facts and more. Pioneering Muslim philosophers, astronomist, doctors, scientists,

4 **Sadeq, Mohamemd.**

رطق خيرات نم حملام - يضا مال اى لى عة لال ط
[Looking at Qatar's Past]. Doha: Al Rayyan Magazine,
2016

Education and Learning: a Priority

The cultural and literate movement in Qatar started as early as the 18th century. This was noticeable when the Port of Al Zubarah – a coastal village or city located in the east north of Qatar peninsula – now expanded into a key trade center and cultural hub in the region. Al Zubara's flourishing came as a direct result of the Persian conquering of Al Bassra, which was recognized as the region's center for trade and culture before Al Zubarah around 1774-1776. Consequently, several schools and centers for education started to be created in Al Zubarah and other areas in Qatar.⁴

In the 19th century Nabatti poetry emerged in Qatar; practiced by famous poets. This poetry movement was also led by Qatar Founder Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani, who was recognized as a distinguished poet in Nabatti. He was a leader who encouraged learning and the spread of knowledge to educate people. For that reason, he started reprinting important reference books and distributed them at his own expenses to scholars and education centers. He also acquired many books about Islamic principles

and teachings and shared them with Qatari scholars to support their learning and subsequently teaching people.

Mohammed Sadiq in his book 'Highlights of Education and Libraries in Qatar' mentions that education in Qatar started with the 'Katateeb' to which families used to send their children to learn the basics of reading and writing. The main goals for this were for the children to be able to read and write the Holy Book: Quran. However, the discovery of oil in the Gulf countries played an essential role in developing all life aspects for these communities. Noticeable advancements involved the social, economic, political cultural and demographic characteristics of living. Notably, the driving force behind the cultural development was led by official government institutions which established the needed foundation for a literate movement for their small communities. The local community and civic groups did not play a distinctive role in this movement due to lack of practical expertise and the low number of residents in Qatar and other Gulf countries at that time.

Qatar was also better positioned than other Gulf countries, as it had the biggest number of 'Kattateeb' and schools during 1890; this was under the rule of Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed the founder of modern Qatar. Ten primary schools existed during his

5 **Al Sheibani, Mohamemd.**

رضاحل و يضا مل ا ني ب ة ب ر عل ا ر ط ق ة رام!
[Qatar Emirate between the Past and Present].
Beruit: Dar Al Thaqafa, 1962

regime. This is in addition to a middle school 'Al-Rashedeya' which taught the Turkish curriculum. In 1931, the first school was established and called 'Al-Atherya School'. it was built through the direct support and sponsorship of Sheikh Abdulla bin Jassim. Before having this school established, many Qatari people used to send their children to the 'Katateeb'; informal assemblies set to teach children how to read and write and learn to memorisethe Quran. A second school was established in 1947 and was called 'Al-Eslaha Al Muhammadiyah'. This one was considered as the very first formal school in the history of education in Qatar.⁵



Dar Al Kutub Building in 1960s with one floor only.

Various private libraries were established by the early rulers of Qatar. One of these leading rulers was Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah, who owned several private libraries, which he set up within his palaces in Qatar such as Al-Rayyan Palace and AL-Rumeilah Place. Sheikh Abdulla was well-known to open his Majlis and libraries to all people interested to learn, whether from Qatar or the Arabic region. He also established a recurrent session to provide a platform for literate debate and exchange of knowledge with 'Al-Adab' scholars meetings.

The modern concept of libraries was not recognized in Qatar before 1950s as the acquisition and ownership of books was limited to wealthy families and well-established traders in the country, such as pearl merchants, religion scholars and judges. These families usually created small spaces in their homes for private libraries where they shelved their valuable books on various topics, such as Islamic studies, pearl measurement, navigation maps etc. Most people in Qatar at those times were focusing on earning their daily living due to poverty and the scarcity of food resources. The hard living and lack of sustainable income did not allow the common people to learning opportunities. In the fifties and after the discovery of oil, an education committee was created in Qatar to plan the establishment of schools for the small Qatari community. Alongside these schools and in planning

to equip them with the needed learning resources, the plans for libraries started to emerge as well. Hence, the first library came with the name 'Al-Maraf library', which means the education or the knowledge library; this one was the first formal library established in the Gulf region. The first publishing and printing house was established in 1957 to support the printing of books and newspapers by the first publishing house in Qatar: Al-Arooba.

Mustafa Al Dabag mentions in his book 'Qatar History and Present, that Qatar had two public libraries and few private libraries in the fifties. The core of 'the Al-Maraf library was established in 1954 with a budget of 65,000 rupees. This library hosted 1500 volumes of books. Schools established at that time also had small libraries established within them to facilitate the learning journeys of the enrolled students. Eighteen school libraries existed with an approximate collection ranging between of 100-250 items per library. Al-Maraf Ministry extended the support to neighboring regions and provided them with schools' textbooks and library collections. The most generous neighbor was the Coast of Oman, known today as the United Arab Emirates.

Initially the big libraries in Qatar were established in a modest manner. Nevertheless, the set up of these libraries did not take long to develop after the establishment of the Al-

Maraf library. The Qatari government invested up to 50,000 rupees every year on libraries operations and the acquisition of books. The Dar Al Kutub library project was identified as a new project, which shows the increasing interest in constructing libraries in Qatar. It was established under the patronage and the direct interest of Sheikh Ali bin Abdulla, who oversaw the preparations of whole project and its inauguration. Earlier, he also founded the Public Library of Qatar in 1957 and supported the establishment of the Al-Maaref Library in 1954. His palace in Al-Rumaila was open to the public providing access his private library there during the 1950s. Sheikh Ali's love for knowledge and learning made him include in his will his desire to build a library after his death containing all his private collection and open to the public to benefit of its valuable resources. His desire came to realization in 1983 with the opening of the Sheikh Ali private library which stands to welcome people until present days. He also founded libraries outside Qatar, such as 'Qasser Alya' Library in Lebanon and 'Al-Ehsah' Public Library in the Kingdom of Saudia Arabia.

In 1957, the first ministry of education was created and the education sector in Qatar began its vast development in the subsequent two decades with the emergence of several schools in different areas in the country. Educational milestones included a first girls'

- 6 **Khalifa, S.A.** (1992). Libraries and librarianship in Qatar. *Journal of information science*, 18(6), 481-489
Al Dabag, Mustafa. طوق رضا حو خيرات
[Qatar's Past and Present]. Beirut: Dar Al Tale'a, 1961
- 7 **Al-Nasser, Mohammed.** (1985). *Dār al-kutub al-Qaṭariyah fī 22 'ām. al-Dawḥah: al-Dār*

school in 1956, a first evening school for illiterates in 1957, a teacher's education center institution in 1963, a first college for girls and another college for boys in 1973, followed by the creation of Qatar University in 1977. The reason for me to state so detailed the development aspects of education in Qatar relates to their close link to libraries and learning in general. The main reason for Qatar to invest in libraries was to be targeting the advancement of education and providing essential resources to help the education growth in Qatar.

A Legacy to Cherish

Dar Al-Kutub Al Qatariyya was first founded as a public library and it started its journey of Dar Al-Kutub through the ministry of education on December 29, 1962. The ministry at that time decided to merge the two existing libraries – the Public library and Al Maaref library – to expand the services to students at school, and public, and to provide essential resources of books and periodicals. The director of Dar Al-Kutub was also the director of the education department in the ministry which enabled better understanding of the school's needs and enhanced efficiency in operations of the library. He was the person behind the idea of establishing a modern library to support the schools and provide literate resources

in different topics. He then was assigned to oversee and manage DAK and to ensure its successful operation.

Dar Al-Kutub remained under the management of the ministry of Education 'Maaref' for almost 30 years, after which it moved to report to the ministry of Mass Communication. A restructuring of the ministry of Education occurred in 1971, based on a decision by the Ministers' Council in Qatar. With this decision, Dar Al -Kutub was retained to report to the Minister while the school libraries were moved from DAK supervision to report to the Department of Cultural Affairs in the same ministry.⁶ Subsequently it was then placed under the curatorship of the National Council for Culture, Arts, Literature and Heritage in 1998.

It was only in 1982 that Dar Al-Kutub gained the mandate of a national library with the issue of the Emiri decree no. 14, 1982 concerning the establishment of a legal deposit process for Qatari publications managed by DAK. With this, DAK became one of the first libraries in the Gulf States to organize and collect the national publications of a country.⁷ It started acting as the national library of the country with this decision for decades until the new national library project was announced in 2012. Under the ministry of Education, Dar Al-Kutub possessed the independence in communication with other directorates in

- 8 **Al-Nasser, Mohammed.** (1998). *Dār al-Kutub al-Qaṭarīyah: Al-maktabah al-waṭanīyah wāqī'uhā wa-injāzātuhā.* al-Dawḥah: al-Dār.

the ministry and elsewhere, which allowed for flexibility in conducting its operations, establishing new projects, conducting library programs, the prompt implementation of plans and developments, and the opening of new library branches throughout the state of Qatar. Dar Al-Kutub was also able to send representatives to annual meetings of the National Libraries Directors of the Arab world.



Construction of adding a second level to Dar Al Kutub Building in 1980s.

The library resided initially in a two-storey building, containing a main reading room measuring 1,200 m² and comprising 70,000 volumes, with seating for 100 people. The facility furthermore housed a periodical reading room accommodating 40 readers, a small reading room dedicated for manuscripts, accommodating 10 users at a time. A 100 m² for microfilms that fit for two users at a time completes the full setting of Dar Al-Kutub. The current building of DAK was established by a

generous donation of its collection from Sheikh Ali Al Thani, who has also been instrumental in funding the construction of a designated building for this collection, and the recruitment of staff to oversee the functioning of the library.

There has been an intention to transform the microfiche library into an archiving center, or a digital library to preserve the Qatari heritage. To further enhance its status as a comprehensive library services facility, a section for books and periodical binding was created.⁸ The establishment of a distinguished annual participation in book fairs both locally and globally followed. Proceeds of the book fair was channeled by Dar Al -Kutub to the development of sections and services, like archiving, cataloguing processes, the acquisition of new equipment such as computers, and providing internet access. In 2012, it was stated that DAK was moving to a new building to further advance and develop its services.

In a research study conducted in 2018 to understand the community perception of Dar Al-Kutub, it was shown that many community members were aware of the fact that DAK was a merger of two libraries, becoming the first public library in the region in 1960s. Patrons who visited the library, expressed a personal attachment to Dar Al-Kutub proven by their regular visits since a very young age. By the



Dar Al Kutub Building Today.

1970s, Dar Al-Kutub had established itself as a significant landmark in the city of Doha, building a bridge between Qatar and the rest of the Arab world by linking the people of Qatar to the rest of the Arabic region. This was through the subscription of periodicals in those countries, which enabled the community to learn more about what is happening e.g. in Egypt (even more than the Egyptians at home). Today Dar Al-Kutub is still rich with a valuable and rare collection related to Arabic culture. By 2012, DAK had a collection of 281,000 Arabic and 38,098 English books, 1,163 periodicals in Arabic and 266 English, 865 Arabic and English dissertations by Qatari students, 533 microfiches, 2018 manuscripts, and 154 CDs. In 2011, DAK boosted more than 16,000 memberships in their records.

In order to meet the increasing needs of the Qatari community, Dar Al-Kutub launched expansion plans. It started with modification of the library building which resulted in having an additional level, designed as a huge reading spaces for users. During the 1970s, it also started establishing public library branches in different remote areas in the country; this resulted in having five library branches. One of which was mainly dedicated for women. The acquisition of books focused on the community nature of each of these and their cities. For example, the fishing community of Al Khor has a primary interest in subjects relating to fishing, stemming from its geographical proximity to the coast. Al Shamal community on the other hand, traditionally being a place of farming, plantation and poetry reflected this culture in the available collection in its branch library. The towns of Al Wakra and

Mesaieed have historically been the focus of oil exploration resulting in its library providing research and reading material related to technology and oil production. The public library in Al Rayyan focused its collection more on poetry and Islamic studies, while Al Khansa library targeted women and children as its primary user group.

At one point, plans were initiated to open an internet café in DAK, and expansion plans were made including a mobile library or more branches to reach out for a bigger pool of users in Qatar. DAK objectives in relation to serving the community included: providing information to the general public, expand library services with the establishment of new public library branches, legal deposit, creation and maintenance of a union catalogue for all libraries in Qatar, research, recommend library development legislations, book exchange, programs with local, regional, and international organizations, and the organization of a yearly book fair. In its early years, DAK had a dedicated section for library services as one of ten sections like management: acquisition, cataloguing, facilities, heritage, and others. The service section included borrowing; internal reading and a reference collection to help users in catalogue search. DAK was very active in conducting workshops and lectures, trained assistant librarians, and hosted diplomatic delegations with tours.

Facing Hard Times

After 1990s, Dar Al-Kutub started to face major challenges, mostly resulting from the reluctance of its staff to embrace change and development. As of 2017, the total number of staff active in the primary building and its branches, stood at 131; 60 of which can be found in DAK. Only one person of the staff had a degree in library sciences. The only library program offered in Qatar in 2000s, stopped its execution. This is believed to be one of the reasons for the decline of Dar Al Kutub library operations at that time.

The building is arguably outdated and is no longer adequate to serve the library purpose. Although Dar Al-Kutub sought the need for expansion in space in the 1970s, this was not the direction adopted by the following management of Dar Al-Kutub; the library continued to operate in the same building without expanding, or moving to a new building to meet the growing population and overcome space limitations. It emerged from a research study, that Dar Al-Kutub suffered of a serious lack of library programs and services. The library should establish outreach activities which can be promoted on social media. Moreover, there was an absence of support and encouragement from the reporting sector. The library needed to review its practices and align them to international standards.



Georgetown Humanities Faculty library, Doha.

An understanding and acknowledgement of its value as a cultural legacy of Qatar must be recognized on all levels. These important elements of the research study were taken forward by the officials overseeing Dar Al-Kutub, and new plans are being set to renovate and update all aspects of the library. Restoration of the building to its original design being carried out at the present time. Once finalized, new concepts and services models will be available to users and lovers of Dar Al- Kutub. The library legacy will continue as a profound knowledge hub for the future generation.

The Qatar National Library project was first announced in 2012. Due to the decrease of Dar Al-Kutub services and outdated collection, decisionmakers in the country sought for a modern library to support the transformation into a learning community. Originally, the

library was designed to be a central library for Education City; a city hosting several branch campuses of American universities in Qatar. Nevertheless, the scope of the library project was large enough to fit the whole country, and not the universities only. Such a decision was not going to affect these campuses in any way, as each one of them had its own specialized library to serve their students. The new library was planned to function as a national research and metropolitan library. The services and collection were planned to target adults, teens, and children. A spectacular heritage library was also planned to be situated at the heart of the tremendous library building.

Although the official opening of the library took place in 2018, the library started earlier offering its services to the users and researchers, mainly virtually with the announcement of the project plans in 2012. Qatar National Library aimed at providing equal access to information to all residents of Qatar, and supported creativity and cultural development. The national mandate of the new library was supported by an Amiri decree issued in April 2018, to announce QNL as the National Library of the country. A role that was carried by Dar Al-Kutub until that moment. The QNL concept was born out of a need for a library service that was more coherent, contemporary, digital, and comprehensively serving the needs of the academic, intellectual,

- 9 **Medawar, K., & Tabet, M.** (2016). Libraries in the state of Qatar: Current situation and future outlook. *Journal of Library Administration*, 56(1), 52-73
- 10 www.qnl.qa



State of the Art Qatar National Library Building.

technological, and social needs of the state of Qatar, while at the same time being aligned to the rapid economic and educational growth and development that Qatar has witnessed in recent times.⁹

The building of Qatar National Library was designed in a way to engage the community members. The renowned Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas was the mastermind behind this art piece; the 45,000 square meters open space was built with the aim of facilitating learning and innovation. The building was designed also to express the vitality of the book by creating a platform that brings study, research, collaboration and interaction within the collection itself; a collection that consists of over one million volumes, among which are some of the most important and rare

manuscripts in the Middle East. The exterior design of the building tackles one's imagination in thinking what it represents. The design is closely linked to books, indeed as it resembles two pieces of paper that are pulled apart and folded diagonally at the corners to create a shell-like structure, enclosing the open-plan interior. The main interior space is designed to allow a precise amount of daylight to enter and maintain a connection to the world outside. Daylight filters through the glass façade, providing natural light that is conducive to reading and socializing. The bookshelves themselves are an integral part of the building itself, rising out of the floor and highlighting the value of books in Qatari culture. More information about this spectacular building and its innovative technologies can be found on the library website¹⁰.



Interior of the new Qatar National Library. Photo: Delfino Sisto Legnani and Marco Cappelletti, Courtesy of OMA.

In 2019, the library has won the Excellence in Concrete Construction Award of the American Concrete Institute. The building won first place in the 'Decorative Concrete' category. The Excellence in Concrete Construction Award recognize concrete projects at the forefront of innovation and technology and showcase such projects to inspire excellence in concrete design and construction around the world.

A Community, Transformed!

The advancement of the library and information sector in Qatar cannot be highlighted without underlying the significant role of professional librarians in this context. It was one of the reasons for the decline of Dar Al Kutub and other libraries in Qatar, that staff running these libraries was not qualified with library degree or professional training. In a study conducted in 2013, it was shown that in Dar Al Kutub and all its branches only one employee out of almost 200, had a bachelors degree in library and information studies. None of the staff there held any post graduate degree.

In the late 1970s, during the peak of interest of libraries in Qatar, Qatar university recognized the need for a program to support the learning journey in the community. Having librarian skills such as cataloguing and reference services, was deemed essential. When the program started, it was designed with limited number of modules leading to a diploma. When proven to be successful, the university further developed the program and turned it into a bachelor's degree. Based on available resources, Qatar library program was one of the best in the region compared to other international programs. Although the program had more than 1200 graduates in total, unfortunately the program closed around 2006 for no clear reasons. This may have contributed greatly to the decline of library services in the following years.

When Qatar National library project was declared, there was a strong determination to revive the library sector in Qatar back again to its golden ages. It was realized that this cannot be accomplished without having good foundations for professional and accredited librarianship. Therefore, the project plan of the library included a capacity building

strategy to enhance the staff competencies. Consequently, a master's program in library and information studies was initiated in partnership with the University College of London. This program was accredited by CILIP and graduated more than 100 students during its 10 years contract. Many libraries and information centers in Qatar benefited from this project and recruited these graduates. Qatar National Library itself, retained more than 15 students to work in the library. Several of these are in leading supervisory positions.

The community appetite for establishing libraries in Qatar, increased significantly in the few last years. Almost all government institutions and ministries host specialized libraries within them. We started to see more libraries in museums, non profit organizations and many private libraries opened to public. The IFLA Library of The World website statistic indicates that Qatar has one national library, eight academic, ten public, and 267 school libraries. These figures were collected in 2017, and the number of libraries today would have been increased.

As the world grew more globalized, knowledge expanded proportionately, as did the desire for educational advancement, economic progress, and technological modernization. The internet, smartphones, and the social media revolution have

systematically decreased the need to visit libraries as the port of call for knowledge acquisition. Qatar is marking a new era for the library sector: the role of knowledge for the community's development. Based on the National Statistics center, it was proven that libraries around the country have witnessed a "whopping" rise in the books borrowings rate. More than 33,000 books were borrowed from libraries in Qatar in 2016. Within only a year, this percentage increased by 500 percent with more than 200,000 books borrowed in 2017. The Qatar National Library was the main contributor to this high percentage.

Libraries have traditionally been positioned as the oasis in the search for knowledge. Carrying collections of only printed material initially, libraries represented places of learning within a controlled, tranquil environment. They have been a source of intellectual engagement, research, as well as providing an escape from the bustle of expanding city life. Qatar's vast and rapid development will be obvious in the coming years, as it recognized a vital priority of investing in knowledge. The knowledge provided by well-established libraries and information centers for the people to prosper.

About the author

Anna-Maria Soininvaara is director of Helsinki Central Library Oodi since June 2018, which is the biggest library and cultural centre in Helsinki. Her former position for 14 years was deputy library director and in this position, she was in charge of the planning process of the building of a new library. Among the other big projects are those related to new logistics enterprise and robotics in library.



Cooperation, Citizen Involvement and Partnerships by Anna-Maria Soininvaara (Finland)

The process that led to Oodi, the new Helsinki Central Library lasted long and had many stages. The first proposals came up over 20 years ago. Steadfast work began roughly 10 years before the actual opening of the building. In Finland, municipalities fund libraries completely. Therefore, it was very important to get justification of the project from citizens, and in this way secure the critical support of politicians. For this reason, the library had to keep both the public and politicians informed and actively involved during the entire process. We created a strategy of influential communication by maintaining a steady flow of news and not allowing too much time to pass between updates about the progress of the project.

A second participatory element serving to drive the project was the content itself. The values and principles of the Helsinki City Library demanded that we include citizens as partners from the earliest stages to strengthen active citizenry in the community. To make the best possible new library we needed help from users and residents. At the same time, we also needed their acceptance and enthusiasm to advocate for the project in the political arena. In short, we could not secure the new central library without the active interest and commitment of the public.

A third point was that we also hoped to obtain some economical support from outside the public sector. We spent a lot of time and effort to reach different funding organizations, businesses, foundations etc. In the end, we failed there. Businesses proposed some ideas, however, these proposals focused narrowly on how their brands would be visible in the central library. In some cases, they participated in our so-called influencer meetings. On occasion, these brought up some useful new ideas, but they still did not bring the funding we sought. Consequently, it became even more important to keep the decision-makers well informed and engaged for the entire process.

Background, Participation and Preparing for the Contest

The central library project started in 2008. Mikko Leisti served as a consultant and authored a tentative project plan named 'The Heart of the Metropolis'. For the first version, he interviewed numerous citizens, politicians, and other people of influence. The library contributed by gathering and collecting information, ideas, and dreams of residents. We used different means to do so: events,



Photo: Jonna Pennanen.

campaigns, a virtual 'Tree of Dreams' and so on. The influencer meetings targeted specific groups that we thought might have some extra input or output in the library project. These included authors and literary related people, pedagogues, teachers from kindergarten to adult education, gaming and other media sectors, technology firms, future scientists, immigrant groups, and people with disabilities. Workshops served as a great way to obtain many ideas from special groups in a relatively short timeframe.

The open-ended collecting of ideas in the virtual Tree of Dreams (an application where anyone could place their ideas as a new leaf on a tree) was a great success. We collected more than 2300 different ideas. We catalogued these into smaller themes and used them as background material for the architecture competition. In addition, there was a group called Friends of the Central Library. This was a development-oriented community where the most active citizens could refine ideas and test ready concepts. Of course, we cannot forget

the city library's own development groups. These groups served during two separate stages. The first stage was active before the architecture competition, when the early concepts and competition material were still under formation. The second stage was after the competition when the plans needed more refining. In all, roughly one third of the entire library staff participated in various development groups. In addition to gathering ideas from staff, the staff's engagement in the central library project also helped solidify their commitment and common ownership of the project.

Planning and Interior Design

Through these methods, we came to the stage where we could formulate the description and content for the international architecture competition. The competition period lasted from 2012-2013. During that time, we took care to maintain the interest of users and politicians and kept them ready



to participate. It was a nerve-racking time for anyone associated with the central library project. It was not until 2015 that the city council gave final approval to proceed with the construction of the new central library. However, the background work with residents never stopped during any of the stages.

After the final approval came and the construction work began, the public was involved in other ways. One such way was selecting pilot projects that received funding through participative budgeting. From previously given user input, eight different pilot projects were designed. The public voted for four of them, which we would implement in other Helsinki libraries. From this experience, we received positive feedback to include makerspace functions, and the future shape of the central library's foreign language collection was formed.

It is important to note that nothing happens by itself. Both development planning as well as participatory planning each have their own point of view. Each point of view must remain separate yet be actively considered: this ensures that development planning continues and employs participatory means to bring them to fruition. Yet what are these methods, and can we really trust that improvements will follow? Is it not such that people always want just 'more of the same', or do certain groups keep an eye

out on their own benefits? This does happen to some extent. That is why it is the duty of library staff to keep in mind the unseen and unheard library user.

Implementation and the First Year

Not long after the initial opening on December 5, 2018, we soon began uncovering many problems in the building. There were things that functioned in theory, but not in practice. We did not have time to organize extensive redesign workshops with patrons. However, we tried to get some customer perspectives where possible. We also used social media to gather development ideas and repair needs. We eventually did organize some smaller workshops to finalize certain details, for example the location of baby strollers during events. This challenge we have revisited a few times. Just when we thought we might finally have developed the best solution, the corona pandemic halted all events. So, we are still unsure if the most recent solution is the best one or not.

The weather in Helsinki is normally very snowy and wet during winter months. In the first year we found it very problematic how the slush and snow influenced the third floor's beautiful wooden surface. While strollers



brought in slush and gravel, ice cleats that are commonly attached to the shoes of elderly people made small holes in the floor. To answer these problems, we moved the stroller parking area, and placed chairs next to the elevators so people could take off the ice cleats. We tested various chair models with seniors to see which were best suited for this.



Oodi Makerspace. Photo: Jonna Pennanen.

The playground services for preschool children in the north end of the first floor were also a problematic area. It was very popular, but the space is cramped and cold. Babies crawled around in the middle of draughty areas. Moving the playground to the third floor and merging it with library's own family services solved one problem but made some new ones. These were often design related. For example, we had to improve the safety of an upper level by installing more wire netting along certain areas not originally planned to host small children.

The public bathrooms on the lower floor aroused a lot of complaints and feedback. Fulfilling Oodi's non-discriminatory principles, all public toilets are gender neutral. The architects designed bathroom stall doors that let light through when in use to increase a sense of security. However, some people felt anxious due to this even though one cannot see in from the outside. This is one example of an issue we did not consider redesigning despite many requests. We think that the concept, where the stalls are for everyone and share a large handwashing area, provides for both safety and a non-discriminatory environment. However, we increased the frequency and level of cleaning. To assuage the concerns of privacy, we created a short video clip that we shared on social media showing that privacy is maintained when using a bathroom cubicle. A small but feisty group should not succeed in pressuring for solutions that are discriminatory in the long term. Still, it was important to take note of the feedback and subsequently put more effort into communication.

We celebrated Oodi's first year on December 5, 2019 contently not knowing that the year ahead would bring a temporary closing and all sorts of restrictions due to the pandemic. We temporarily installed a new Tree of Dreams on the lobby wall. This time it was a picture of a real tree where people could add post-it notes with ideas or wishes. We



Oodi childrens playground. Photo: Risto Rimppi.

received a lot of them. They were not exactly development ideas, and many were directed at neighboring facilities, not us. We were delighted to receive many thanks, so we took that to mean the development work until that point had succeeded. The tally of over 3 million visits in the first year after opening tells the same story.

Conclusions and Contemplating the Future

We developed Oodi in many ways and using multiple methods. We want to keep the patrons involved, from the very first ideas to a place where they continually contribute to improving our services. Functional channels that work particularly well are virtual ones, such as the idea harvesting method of the Tree of Dreams. During the planning stage, normal

workshops also produced good results and people who participated in them engaged the project and became fine advocates. Utilizing effective communication and inspiring public events, politicians committed themselves to the project.

The problem with all the participatory methods is a skewed representation. In both virtual surveys and workshop participation, the active portion of the citizenry is easily over-represented. Consequently, the library, which serves all residents, must then start fishing for missing groups. Here we achieved successful experiences from attending open public events. Library staff attended various festivals and parks, meeting and chatting with people. We also interviewed passersby in streets and squares, especially teenagers. Rough concepts were tested and refined into projects. The public could then vote for which ones they favored. Local neighborhood libraries

piloted a number of these. One of the problems with this approach was that the development of rough concepts was staff driven. Thus, public participation appeared stronger than it was.

We also organized workshops during the planning stage with service design offices. There were professionals facilitating the workshops and drawing up drafts, but their lack of substantive knowledge of the library profession made the results difficult to realize. Of course, library staff participated in these workshops, but in some cases it appeared that we paid firms for an exercise in explaining to them the premises of our work. The workshops were not completely fruitless as we did achieve some quality summations and new thoughts on how to incorporate design elements.

The workshops we arranged with our partners and potential partners produced some benefits too. We certainly acquired expert input on special issues like ICT. On the other hand, an unintended consequence of these was outsized expectations that the new central library would fulfill every group's dreams. The different influencer groups did not meet, so each one inadvertently got the wrong impression that Oodi would become a big actor in their specific sector. Inevitably, that caused some disappointments. Oodi is not a place just for ICT-nerds, or literature fans, or educators, or young people, but it is for everyone.



A few months after the opening, we also encountered new user groups, which we had kept in mind at the planning stage but surprised us by their sheer volume. Homeless people, particularly the wandering Roma population, came in during the very cold winter nights to warm themselves. We sought assistance by contacting an organization that had experience with working with these groups. They also provided interpreters, who helped us to communicate and understand each other. Soon after, we started to design special services for this group: Finnish language and literacy lessons.



One group that we did not anticipate enough was drug addicts, who discovered Oodi's restrooms during the second winter after opening. The pandemic has temporarily halted its expansion, so we still must examine how to deal with this issue. Is there something we can do for these people without endangering other library users? How tolerant can we be towards various disturbances? How can we maintain the status of being a treasured cultural house and still welcome all groups? Can we reach out to even the most marginalized user groups, and acquire development ideas from them?

Participatory development is successful, if we can ensure that there are large variations of different user groups among the developers. Otherwise, the results quickly become biased and we cultivate a library that is predominantly for the user groups that are the easiest to approach: active young adults, who always tackle new initiatives or the energetic and culture consuming senior citizens. This does not happen on its own. The library must ensure that as many voices as possible are heard, and their respective needs understood. While the construction of the building has reached completion, the library never will. We are constantly developing the library and we do that together with library users.

About the author

R. David Lankes is a professor and the director of the University of South Carolina's School of Information Science. He has always been interested in combining theory and practice to create active research projects that make a difference. His work has been funded by organizations such as The MacArthur Foundation, The Institute for Library and Museum Services, NASA, The U.S. Department of Education, The U.S. Department of Defense, The National Science Foundation, The U.S. State Department, and The American Library Association.

David is a passionate advocate for libraries and their essential role in today's society earning him the American Library Association's Ken Haycock Award for Promoting Librarianship in 2016. He also seeks to understand how information approaches and technologies can be used to transform industries. In this capacity he has served on advisory boards and study teams in the fields of libraries, telecommunications, education, and transportation including at the National Academies. He has been a visiting fellow at the National Library of Canada, The Harvard School of Education, and was the first fellow of ALA's Office for Information Technology Policy. His book, *The Atlas of New Librarianship* won the 2012 ABC-CLIO/Greenwood Award for the Best Book in Library Literature.



The Library as a Movement

by R. David Lankes (USA)

What is a library? It is not a rhetorical question? And during the Covid-19 pandemic, it proved not to be an academic question. When the doors of libraries across the globe shuttered to enforce social distancing and lockdowns, the question became very real. If you could not enter a building, or you could not borrow a physical book, did the library still operate?

The answer to the question 'what is a library', has changed; one might say evolved – over time. In the late 1800s and the first half of the 1900s the answer would have indeed involved buildings and books. It was the era of the book palace; a time when collecting books was vital because they were scarce. The great value of the library was in pulling collections together, and the vast majority of the books gathered were about the rest of the world, not the library's service community. It was a time of grand architecture. It was also a time of the universalists and documentalists. That is, folks who believed that knowledge could be contained in the pages of a book, and that the knowledge of the world could be sorted into neat categories, ignoring that those categories were developed by and for a culture dominated by white men. The king of the information world was the book, and libraries were an apex predator in the information ecosystem.



The Digital Era

The era of the book palace was superseded with the advent of computing and digital documents. Libraries went from collections of things to information centers. Libraries were no longer just a place with stuff, they were a gateway to the world. And that world was information. Gone was the quaint Victorian era concept of the patron, in was the modern user; a term freshly taken from computer scientists and drug dealers. Now it was not about having it all, it was about finding to it all.

The scanner and the contract were the defining tools of the information center age. If librarians could not scan it, they would license it. Databases, e-books, video services: the drive was to expand the collection with resources from around the world. In our drive to provide users access, we also transformed the very nature of collecting. Gone were the days of owned materials being ferried around the countryside in delivery vans (well, not gone, but let us just say we didn't put them on the postcards anymore), in were metadata schemas like the Dublin Core to replace traditional cataloging output like MARC to build towering virtual libraries.

Gone also were the days of budgets being strained to buy materials one time. Now libraries had to devote an ever increasing

portion of their budgets to paying for access to a resource annually; a change that is now once again coming back to haunt us with terms of e-book lending. Libraries also spent a lot of money on public access computers.

From Patrons to Users

A funny thing happens when libraries moved from patrons to users, and from collecting to accessing. The interactions in the libraries tended to move from relationships to transactions. Instead of telling the story of the library in outcomes for communities, librarians begin to quantify themselves. Now instead of just counting the volumes in buildings, librarians emphasized hits, circulated items, attendance, and of course, gate counts.

Then libraries lost their monopoly. Now to be clear, libraries have not been the sole source of information and access since, well, ever. Though libraries did have a lock in medieval Europe until Gutenberg disrupted the knowledge world. But libraries at least had a large portion of mind share in communities. With the advent of ubiquitous networks like the internet, and the ability to monetize access, mostly through advertising, libraries' portion of the popular mind share shrank.



A new way of thinking about libraries and librarians and their value to communities was needed. Librarians did not just invent these out of thin air, rather they saw non-access and non-collection activities in a new light. Librarians saw that the value they provide to the community was in the community itself. Libraries became the Third Space, and instead of users, we had citizens, neighbors, or members.

The Library Café

The focus was not on collections alone, but on being a place where community members could come and think and work with, or without, those collections. Civic improvement was the newly emphasized focus. Librarians helped folks find jobs. They provided vital literacy services to youth and adults. A library was a safe place to explore dangerous ideas.

And what tool helped define this epoch? The Library Café. Yes, the café as a literal place to serve coffee, but also the numerous spaces where librarians pulled down the stacks, or never built them in the first place to allow folks to get together. Librarians called them living rooms, or agora, or simply 'the teen space'. Many cities rebuilt or refurbished central libraries to promote economic development. Libraries began hosting co-working spaces.

This is also the time when communities began to get very confused. Sometimes that was phrased inelegantly as 'why do we need libraries when we have Google?' It was when communities began wondering, what is the difference between a library and a community center?



The living room at the Winterthur public library in Switzerland invites members to sit and knit and talk.



The Tønsberg public library in Norway is built on and around the ruins of a medieval abbey to provide spaces for meetings, studies and performances.

The Library as a Third Place

It was also a time when librarians got very good at posts on Instagram. Because they had a hard time putting their contributions into words, librarians had no problem showing the growing number of diverse faces coming into libraries. The library identity became more diffuse, and more local in nature. But it was the seeking for an identity that lead to the next era, though it is more a later part of the third space era. But for now, one can call it the era of the community hub.

Librarians began to put words and concepts to the third space: but as often happens, librarians were better at saying what they weren't as much as what they were. Libraries weren't a community center as in an open meeting room. Libraries weren't indoor parks with books. Libraries were a learning center and community hub. Community members became learners, and librarians' focus rested squarely on the community creating its own knowledge and identity. The tool of preference? The Makerspace.

No not just 3D printers in a room, but the idea that the community could come together and create in a library. For some libraries the maker space is 3D printers and

hand tools. For others it's a wide-open living room for group chats. Still others it is the marked spike in programs where community members teach fellow community members.

Learning Center and Community Hub

In libraries across the globe video and audio studios began to pop up. Those scanners once used to digitize the materials of the library were turned loose on family photo albums. Walls were pulled down for workshops. Librarians looked into the eyes of the Smart City - Where artificial intelligence used the data gathered from internet connected appliances sharing how much power they were consuming to become more energy efficient, to sensors embedded in roads to give real time traffic information and relive congestions, to security camera that could identify crowd and commuter patterns to ensure optimal use of mass transportation- and claimed the smart citizen turf-where citizens could make informed decisions about the actions of artificial intelligence and ensure privacy in a world of overwhelming data. Libraries loaned out baking pans with books and even had cooking classes to boot. Libraries not only paid for video databases; they created their own YouTube

channels. Librarians talked about great libraries building communities and the communities as the true collection of any library.

These eras demonstrate an accelerating evolution away from rigid institutional boundaries. The line between those that serve and those that use becomes fuzzy, and in some cases disappear altogether. In Pistoia and Perugia, in Fayetteville and London, in Sydney and Taiwan library programming has changed from librarians offering classes and activities, to the library being a platform for community members to share their knowledge. As the internet shifted from a place to get information to a place to be social and in so doing completely disrupted who was the product and who was the customer, so too have our libraries shifted the concept of expertise, with the librarians moving from a know it all to a find it all, to a – what – orchestrate it all? Librarians have become facilitators of community learning.

This shift, while hardly universal, does make answering our initial question, 'what is a library', much more difficult to answer. When a library is all about learning, why is it not a school. When the true collection of a library is the community itself, why is it not a community center? When the boundaries of expertise dissolve does the library as well? Or does the library have to revert back to the days of certainty and the book palace?

The Pandemic Consequences

Once again, the current pandemic closings show this is not a rhetorical question. When the physical doors closed libraries shifted budgets to provide e-books in the place of physical ones, but what did they provide to replace the expertise of the community or the living room hub?

At first there wasn't much of an answer, but then youth librarians began online story times. Some libraries saw a massive increase in attendance to library programs unshackled from time and place. And then the role of librarians began to shift as well. Librarians began to create content: story times, and then tai chi classes, online knitting groups, community conversations on race and inequity through Zoom. Many a library director has remarked that librarians have fallen in love with a new freedom to create content, not simply organize it. In fact, the fear among some libraries was supporting traditional services now that librarians have tasted a new role as community authors.

And so, we need a new era, a new organizing concept for libraries. One that recognizes librarians as content creators just as much as the community members they

support. A new era that sees the physical aspects of the library as co-equal to the digital, and one where the bounds of library and community are even further eroded. Because the idea that an organization creates content with the community is itself indistinct. The real definition of a library comes from (and always has) *why* do librarians do this, and why does a community support the librarians in that task.

You see the eras I have presented are at best an imposed structure, and at worst, a lie. In Victorian England the so-called book palace public libraries also set up gaming parlors. Why? To lure impressionable patrons away from pubs and anti-social behavior (as the Victorians defined it). When libraries as information centers sought to provide gateways to information they did so pushing for openness and sharing networks. They advocated for revisions to copyright law and to ensure the privacy of users in seeking out information. The library living rooms for our members were deliberately open to all, welcoming in new citizens and refugees. The programming of the community hubs was done with a sense of equity and empowerment.

The Public Library as a Movement

The library throughout history, particularly the public library, has never existed solely as a place or a collection, it has always been a movement. We are only now seeing that reality more clearly.

In the United States public libraries grew only as part of women's suffrage movements and reforms to child labor laws. Carnegie built his libraries to provide education to his workers. Public libraries across the globe have always been seen as an instrument of social wellbeing often operating counter to a larger society's views on intellectual property and social spending.

To see this, look beyond the story times of the pandemic to the simultaneous rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. In the US and across the globe racial justice emerged as a topic to get citizens out of their homes and onto the streets. Diversity, equity, and inclusion have been adopted as core missions of libraries of all types. From collecting books by authors of color, to hosting human libraries where people of different races, religions, and occupations are brought together in a safe civil space to have hard conversations the library seeks not to supply, or inform, but to change the community of which it is a part.



Human Library, a date with a special person you normally wouldn't meet! Utrecht Public Library. Photo: Martijn Bergsma.

In the Library as Movement paradigm the library is a platform for use by librarians and community members alike in their quest for a better society. Librarians and community members once again become users, but only in the sense that they are both equal users of the library resources to push forward an agenda of social change.

In Denmark and Dallas and Oslo the library provides meeting spaces and co-working spaces for citizens no longer required to show up to an office or working on projects that don't generate revenue. The library is a co-working space for librarians and community members alike; both able to do their jobs anywhere there is an internet connection. In Charleston and Finland and France librarians train to moderate difficult conversations about race, poverty, and religion not as entertainment, or information, but because it improves society. These are not neutral or objective acts: they

are deliberate attempts to solve social problems and they represent a very real philosophy that values diversity.

In Columbia South Carolina once a year, before the pandemic, the state library organizes an annual march on the capital for literacy. Public and school libraries from across the state muster a corps of thousands of children to occupy the state house for read alouds and for politicians to show public support for education. Just because most would agree in the value of literacy doesn't diminish the fact that this is an act of civil demonstration. Libraries are instruments of organizing people for social action even though it does not take place in a library or directly use the collection, and librarians are equal participants and advocates, as the children and their parents.

Conclusion

I have in my time tried to answer the question 'what is a library?' My answer has always been around defining it as a function of librarians. In one book I said, 'I have long contended that a room full of books is simply a closet but that an empty room with a librarian in it is a library!'. In that same book I defined a library as 'a mandated facilitated space maintained by the community, stewarded by librarians, and dedicated to knowledge.' I am now realizing, and wrestling with, the fact that I may not have gone far enough. Is a library a movement where a community (a city, a school, a university, a business) provides resources (space, people, funding, etc.) to change the community itself in pursuit of a better society through learning? Is that too abstract?

It may be very unsatisfying to get to the end of this contribution simply to hear 'I don't know'. Yet that is the nature of a paradigm shift. No one knows when an era starts until it ends. New ideas are messy and unformed. It is in this chaos and disruption that forward movement, creativity, and new possibilities are birthed. It is increasingly evident to me, that the purpose of a library is not to document these births, or to codify these shifts, but to cause them.

About the author

Saskia Leferink has been general manager of the Benelux branch of OCLC since October 2013. After working at both college and public libraries and a publishing house, she has held several positions in the library sector since 1996, when she first joined Pica as account manager, and later as marketing manager. She left in 2001 to join the public library of Midden-Brabant, where as managing director of Public Services, she played a major role in the development of new service concepts and the integration of new branches in the organization as part of a transformation process. In her current role, next to responsibility for activities for academic, college and special libraries in the Benelux, Saskia is also leading activities for public libraries, which includes end-to-end solutions for public libraries.



About the author

Scott Livingston is Executive Director of OCLC Management Services and leads the product management team for library management services at OCLC. In this role, he also manages product operations and the market segment strategy group. Prior to joining OCLC, Scott was senior vice president at Cision and was responsible for global product planning and marketing and US public relations, specialized sales and customer service operations. Previously, he was vice president at LexisNexis Group, heading the public records solutions for legal professionals division. He has also served in a variety of executive management roles related to legal news publishing and book publishing, and he was vice president Strategy & Operations at ProQuest. He began his career as an academic law librarian. He has extensive experience in big data, taxonomies, business development, strategic planning, social media, marketing, and publishing.



What if the library...?

by Saskia Leferink and Scott Livingston
(the Netherlands)

I can honestly say that libraries have always been a substantial part of my life. My mother worked in a library, and as the little bookworm I was, the library with all its treasures had a magical attraction to me. I practically lived there when I was young. During my studies and career, libraries and their communities have always been the focal point. I have worked in, with, and for libraries. You could say that the library is very dear to me. Therefore, I hope for a long, sustainable, and successful future for libraries. And that I'm able to contribute a little to that future.

In a world where digitization, cost efficiency, and social impact have become key concepts, and where competition from social media, internet, and leisure activities is fierce, every day libraries must fight to remain visible. They need to continuously demonstrate their added value to the government and other stakeholders and stay relevant and attractive to their diverse communities.

Fortunately, there are countless wonderful examples of innovation and connections that happen because of libraries. And great examples of the appreciation that libraries receive from the communities they serve; policymakers and councilors, students and teachers, researchers, parents, and children. Looking at the websites of libraries such as LoHal

Tilburg, De Bibliotheek Utrecht, and DOK Delft, highlights just how they present themselves to their communities.

That is why it is so important that libraries never stop investing in their visibility, innovation and connections, in order to continue to inspire and support their users in the search for the answers to their questions. In this way, libraries will continue to be of enormous value for society.

Continuously improving and innovating is challenging and takes lots of energy. However, if you look at the developments in the world around us, there are so many opportunities for libraries. I get particularly inspired by colleagues and others in my network who dare to look ahead and investigate, ask critical questions, and convert their vision into real innovation.

One of those people is my colleague Scott Livingston. Responsible for the global product development of library systems at OCLC, he is ceaselessly focused on the future and is always on the lookout for trends and developments that can help libraries to stay relevant. This relevancy is in the eye of the beholder, or the library user as the case may be. Powerful social, technological and - most recently - medical forces are shaping user expectations in ways that may transform

- 1 **Allah, S.B.**, 2013, *The Source Remembers Malcolm X*, The Source, viewed 14 September 2020
thesource.com
- 2 **Metcalfe, B.**, 1995, *Predicting the Internet's catastrophic collapse and ghost sites galore in 1996*, InfoWorld, viewed 14 September 2020,
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- 3 **Internet World Stats**, 2020, Internet Usage in the European Union, Internet World Stats, viewed on 15 September 2020, internetworldstats.com
- 4 **Kemp, S.**, 2020, *Digital 2020: July Global Statshot*, Data Reportal, viewed on 15 September 2020,
datareportal.com
- 5 **Clark, K.**, 2019, Here's Mary Meeker's 2019 Internet Trends report, TechCrunch, viewed 14 September 2020, techcrunch.com

libraries. In his story, he takes you on a journey to a future full of opportunities for libraries and the communities they serve. I hope his tale will inspire you, as much as it has inspired me. So, let us travel to the future and discover even more opportunities for the great institutions that libraries are.

Malcolm X, once said that the future belongs to those who prepare today.¹ As we start to wade into a period of massive change in technology and human behavior, what promises does the future hold for libraries? And what must we do to prepare?

Imagine a World

Imagine a world with flying cars, robot maids, video phones, and meals cooked with the push of a button. The world of tomorrow is one in which technology enables – and improves – every aspect of daily life. This was the premise and the promise of the 1962 American animated sitcom *The Jetsons*. While I am still waiting for my flying car, daily life in the first part of the 21st century has certainly been enabled by technology in ways that are very similar to the world that *The Jetsons* envisioned. A Roomba robot sweeps my floors. The smart microwave oven displays a recipe and cooks a meal with just the push of a button. Newspapers on tablets and Zoom meetings are now part of our daily routines.

Adapting to these innovations is not always easy. Technology often leaps ahead of us and we scramble to adjust our behaviors, refine our thinking on ethics, and our understanding of the value that we contribute to society. The US Human Rights Activist,

Imagine a world in which you never have to be alone: in fact, a world in which you spend 25% of your entire life exposed to ideas from millions of people across the globe. Whether you live in a small village or a large city, you have the same access to knowledge, culture, and entertainment. You are informed. Imagine a world in which mass media is dead, mass production is dead, mass 'anything' is dead and replaced with the personalized and the bespoke. Irrelevancy disappears as you receive just what you want. You are special. In such a world, what would you expect from your library?

Despite 3Com founder, Robert Metcalfe's now infamous prediction that the Internet would 'go spectacularly supernova and in 1996 catastrophically collapse', the global network has grown to critical importance in our personal, professional, and civic lives.² Today, more than 89% of the EU's 400m citizens use internet, while more than 95% of Dutch citizens use it.³

And we use internet a lot: on average, adults worldwide spend 6.4 hours per day on



Frysklab Makerspace. Photo: courtesy of René Wouters, RWfotografie.

internet. Said another way, we spend more than 25% of our lives online.⁴ The experiences that we have online shape our expectations of the physical world. So, what are those experiences?

Experiences that We Have Online

For one thing, we are seeing a lot of advertisements online. However, these ads are different from the ones we may be accustomed to seeing on television or in print. The fastest growing online advertising platforms focus on one of four 'intelligent' ad models. Facebook, for example, uses targeting, which is a way to identify individuals who are most likely to be interested in the content of a

particular ad. YouTube uses machine learning to automatically time edit clips to optimize viewer engagement. Pinterest has developed interactive ecommerce ads to move viewers from content consumption to action. And Twitter embeds ads (clearly labeled) into search results: the promoted tweet.⁵

In one way or another, all these techniques are looking to place content in contextually correct ways and to create interactions with that content. This idea has implications for libraries' physical and online presence. If a user is browsing yoga DVDs in the library, for example, is it immediately clear to him or her that the library also subscribes to two yoga magazines (one of which is digital) and that the library has a weekly yoga program?



In other words, is the physical library defined by the materials that it houses, or by the library user's experience?

Not all library offerings are tangible, and that can make a truly integrated experience challenging in the physical world. However, all library services – books, events, multimedia, special collections, maker spaces, all of it – can be described with metadata. That makes a fully integrated virtual experience quite possible. And yet, many libraries continue to allow their online presence to reflect the constraints of their physical environment. My local public library allows me to search its catalog online. I can also search for e-books and digital audio books, but not in the online catalog. I need to search a third system for digital movies, a fourth for digital magazines, a fifth for digital music, a sixth for events, and there are no less than four additional options for 'research'.

None of this places the library's content in a contextually correct way nor does it encourage interaction with the content. Given that I am being conditioned to have these contextual, interactive expectations more than 25% of each and every day, the question is: how likely am I to struggle with the disjointed, impersonal virtual library experience? Or am I just going to turn to Google? The 5.6 billion searches that Google handles each day suggests that Google is ahead on this one.⁶ Libraries have the tools to respond to this trend, if they choose. Robust metadata, linked data and visualization tools can allow libraries to place content in contextually correct, interactive ways if we elect to shift from a 'library material' perspective to a 'library user' perspective.

- 6 **Kenshoo**, 2019, *Marketing Metrics: Daily Searches on Google and Useful Search Metrics for Marketers*, Kenshoo, viewed on 14 September 2020, [kenshoo.com](#)
- 7 **Martin, N.**, 2019, *How Much Does Google Really Know About You? A lot.*, Forbes, viewed on 14 September 2020, [forbes.com](#)
- 8 **Accenture**, 2018, *Making It Personal*, Accenture, viewed 14 September 2020, [accenture.com](#)
- 9 **Statista**, 2020, *Daily time spent with the internet per capita worldwide from 2011 to 2021, by device*, Statista, viewed 15 September 2020, [statista.com](#)
- 10 **Chen, J.**, 2020, *Important Instagram stats you need to know for 2020*, SproutSocial, viewed 15 September 2020 [sproutsocial.com](#)
- 11 **Richter, F.**, 2017, **Smartphones Cause Photography Boom**, Statista, viewed 15 September 2020, [statista.com](#)

Imagine a world where a company has a file on each of its customers; and that file contains 1.5 million pages of personal information.⁷ Imagine if that company has 2.5 billion customers. As the world's most popular search engine knows, nearly four quadrillion pages of personal data can empower incredibly personalized experiences and most of us welcome that personalization. But with great power comes great responsibility, and users are also concerned about the use and abuse of their personal information.

Others are much better positioned than I am to talk about the details of global privacy laws. And certainly, compliance with the spirit and the letter of laws like GDPR is critically important. But privacy expectations and norms are more complex and more nuanced than a simple (albeit lengthy) law can account for.

The True User-Centric Future of Library Services

In those 100 days a year we spend online, we regularly trade our privacy rights for things we find valuable: efficiency, customization, personalization, even simple access to information or services. In 2018, Accenture surveyed adults across Europe and North

America.⁸ The survey found that 91% of us say that we prefer personalized experiences online. Eighty-three percent are willing to passively share data in exchange for a personalized experience and 74% are willing to actively share their data.

I suspect that those numbers are so high because that trade (data in exchange for a personalized experience) is based on a set of assumptions that include concepts like visibility and transparency, respect for user privacy and choice, and security. Whether considering physical or virtual experiences, it's paramount that libraries start with privacy: transparent, respectful and secure. From there, the user can determine the sort of interaction that he or she wants. That is the true user-centric future of library services.

But it's more than just personalization that is affecting our expectations. Over 60 of the 100 24-hour days a year, that we spend online is through a mobile device.⁹ And much of that is thanks to the content we are consuming (and creating). Instagram has more than 1 billion monthly active users.¹⁰ The photo sharing platform is powered by the estimated 1.2 trillion digital photos that we humans take every year.¹¹ Image creation and consumption isn't limited to just Instagram though. When Twitter launched in 2006, a tweet was limited to 250 characters; a simple text string. By 2019, more than 50% of all tweets included an image



- 12 **Clark, K.**, 2019, *Here's Mary Meeker's 2019 Internet Trends report*, TechCrunch, viewed 14 September 2020, techcrunch.com
- 13 **Mohsin, M.**, 2020, *10 TikTok Statistics That You Need to Know in 2020* [Infographic], Oberlo, viewed 14 September 2020, oberlo.com
- 14 **Clement, J.**, 2020, *Hours of video uploaded to YouTube every minute 2007-2019*, Statista, viewed 14 September 2020, statista.com
- 15 **Colby, C.**, 2020, *Making it Big on the Small Screen? The Top Online Activities that Have Migrated to Smartphones*, Rock Research, viewed 14 September 2020, rockresearch.com
- 16 **Tankovska, H.**, 2020, *Smart speaker unit sales worldwide 2014-2025*, Statista, viewed 14 September 2020, statista.com
- 17 **Kinsella, B.**, 2020, *Streaming Music, Questions, Weather, Timers and Alarms Remain Smart Speaker Killer Apps, Third-Party Voice App Usage Not Growing*, viewed on 14 September 2020, voicebot.ai

or video.¹² TikTok has over a billion videos viewed each day¹³ while YouTube content creators add an additional 500 hours of video every minute of the day.¹⁴

The proliferation of video creation, editing and sharing applications has created a design fluency and storytelling skill set, particularly among younger generations. (It is worth noting that more than half of all Instagram users are under 34 years old.) Libraries, deeply steeped in text collections and finding tools, may be particularly challenged to adapt to this visual-intensive idea-sharing preference. At the same time, many library offerings - special collections, music, video, creator spaces and events - are ideally suited to pique the interest of these emerging visual communicators. This is particularly true because of the high use of many of these content types on mobile devices. While only half of all smartphone owners use their device to read print (books, newspapers), three-quarters of owners have streamed music and nearly as many have watched videos on their smartphones.¹⁵

It may be tempting to 'check the box' by simply nodding to metadata that can describe these visual library assets, metadata in and of itself fall too short of the mark when it comes to user expectations. We have to ask how likely is it that these visual communicators

are going to revert (adopt?) text-based metaphors to find content. In other words, will they type keywords in a search box? It seems unlikely, particularly when we look at two other emerging trends: smart devices and on-demand services.

Forecasts suggest that more than 130 million Amazon Echo devices will be sold in 2025, a 245% increase in sales compared to 2020. If the prediction holds, there will be over 600 million of the devices in use by 2025. When we consider similar products from companies like Google and Apple, forecasts suggest more than 1.8 billion smart speakers will be used worldwide by 2025.¹⁶

Twenty-nine percent of owners pose a question to their Echo at least once a day, while two-thirds of owners pose a question at least once a week. That is 200 million people each day posing questions to their smart device to find information. While still dwarfed by Google's 5.6 billion daily searches¹⁷, the strong market adoption of these devices would suggest a coming shift to our information discovery habits.

Similarly, on-demand services are forecasted to have hyper growth. Between 2014 and 2025, the on-demand economy is expected to increase 24-fold. This includes ride sharing services like Uber, hospitality

- 18 **Walsh, M.**, 2013, *Instagram Hits 100M Monthly Active Users*, Media Post Raw, viewed 15 September 2020, mediapost.com
- 19 **Gough, C.**, 2020, Number of registered users of Fortnite worldwide from August 2017 to May 2020, Statista, viewed 15 September 2020 statista.com
- 20 **Yuan, E.S.**, 2020, *A Message to Our Users*, Zoom blog, viewed 15 September 2020, blog.zoom.us
- 21 **Copeland, R.**, and Grant, P, 2020, *Google to Keep Employees Home Until Summer 2021 Amid Coronavirus Pandemic*, The Wall Street Journal, viewed on 14 September 2020, wsj.com

services like Airbnb, and (most important for this conversation) streaming media services. Over the past several years, we have seen a clear acceleration in fulfillment times; from a week or more to same day, to same hour, and now even instant fulfillment.

When you look at all of these trends together – personalized experiences, the role that mobile is playing in our internet usage, the rise of smart devices like the Amazon Echo, and forecasted hyper growth for on-demand services – you can see users coming to libraries with clear expectations about how they communicate (visually), how they search (voice), how information is displayed to them (personalized, with permission and transparency), and a sense of immediacy (I want it now).

Covid and New Ways of Life

Over the past year, we have seen how the Covid-19 global pandemic has accelerated many of these trends. Almost overnight, video conferencing became a de facto part of our lives. Instagram reached 100 million active users in 24 months.¹⁸ Fortnite took 18 months to reach 100 million users.¹⁹ Zoom reached 200 million users in 2 months.²⁰ Video conferencing has obvious implications for how libraries deliver

programming and services. Virtual story time for children and book clubs are now a normal part of our lives. But video conferencing has a direct impact on the types of services and collections that libraries offer as well. The pandemic has forced employers across the globe to adopt distance working models; and they work. One of the interesting side effects of distance working is that 'where I live' isn't decided by 'where I work'. How will local governments adjust to attract and retain residents when locally based businesses are no longer an essential part of the employment environment? How will governments adjust to retain businesses who are no longer dependent on local talent? I argue that the role of the public library becomes even more critical in creating a positive civic environment that attracts people in the way that corporations and office towers once did.

The on-demand economy has also rapidly accelerated during the coronavirus pandemic. Much like video conferencing, the rise of on-demand expectations has direct implications for library services and programming. Will users be less likely to patiently wait in a holds queue? Will they continue to attend real-time events, or will they start to prefer asynchronous programming (as we have seen with students in higher education)? But, just like video conferencing, on-demand expectations are going to impact not just how library services are offered, but

what services are offered. The on-demand economy is driving a significant realignment in labor to support essential services like transportation, supply chains, groceries, and healthcare. Workers entering the on-demand economy will need training in new technologies, communication skills, and (quite possibly) vocational skills. Libraries need to reimagine their service mix in light of these new community needs.

Covid-19 has also accelerated our digital transformation. Organizations of all sorts have closed their buildings and continue to operate virtually. Recently, Google announced that its staff would not return to office buildings until the summer of 2021.²¹ In this environment, cloud services become an essential part of the technology landscape. And libraries are not immune from this shift in technology. Collections and services need to be easily discoverable, and efficiently distributed in limited contact ways. Curbside pickup ('click-and-collect') is one immediate offering that libraries have introduced in response to this trend. One can imagine other offerings that are equally impactful, and within our grasp. Digital marketing, for example, allows library offerings to be tailored and displayed to users within their existing contexts.

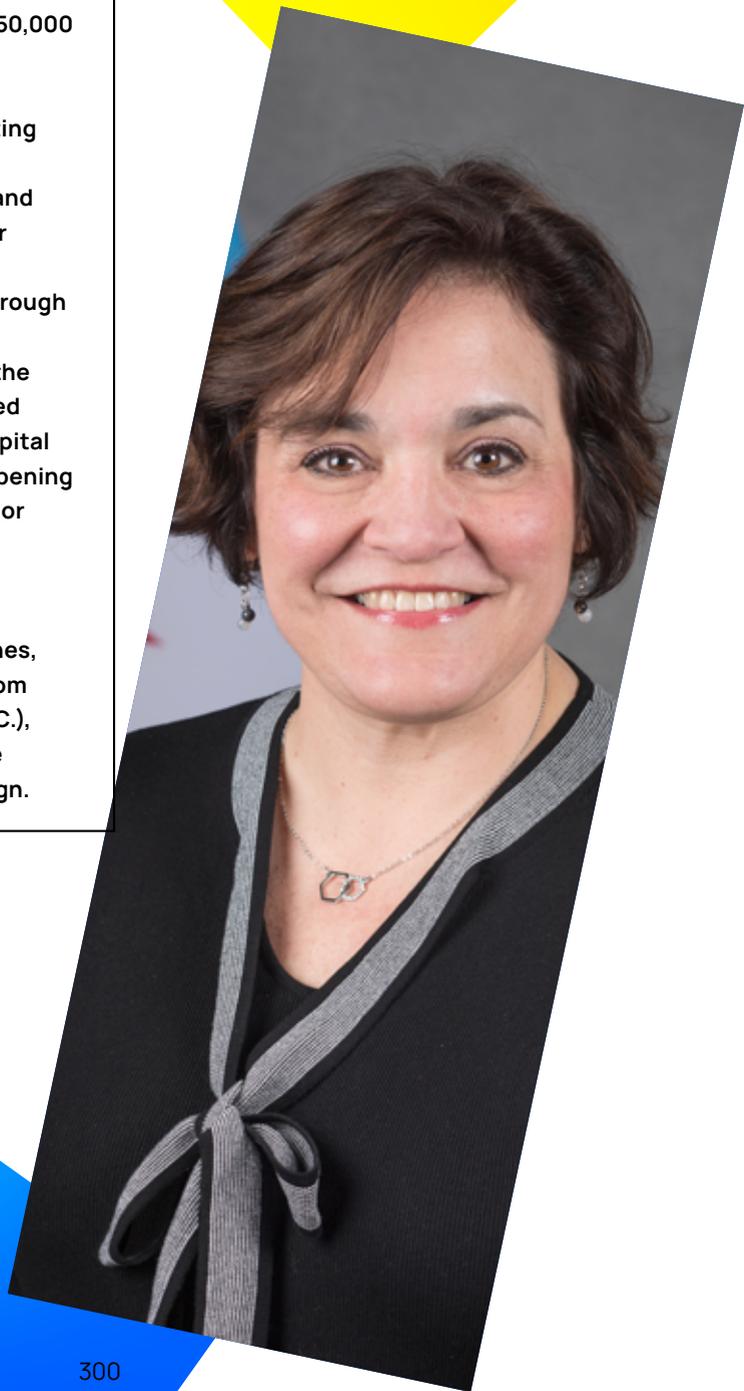
The year 2020 has shown us how rapidly an event can transform our individual behaviors and our societies. For libraries, traditional distinctions between approaches to media formats, collections and programming, and distribution channels become real barriers to users who have become accustomed to on-demand, virtual offerings that are informed by user expectations. Libraries have proven themselves more than capable of adapting to change. I believe that the future is bright for our communities and the libraries that serve them, if we prepare today.

About the author

Upon retiring in August 2020, Andrea Telli spent thirty years leading library and branch operations at Chicago Public Library as a recognized champion of urban libraries. As Commissioner of CPL, she oversaw one of the largest big-city library systems in the world, with an annual budget of \$130 million, 81 branches, three regional hubs and a 750,000 square foot central library.

Andrea has been seasoned leader in setting and delivering on system-wide priorities for Chicago's libraries. She established and led the strategy for library operations for CPL's 81 branches and regional libraries; represented CPL as a mentor librarian through the International Network of Emerging Library Leaders (INELI), funded through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; and led one of the most significant periods of capital improvement in CPL's history, with the opening of 12 brand new library branches and major renovations in 18 branches.

Andrea received her bachelor of arts in Spanish from Drake University (Des Moines, Iowa), a masters in Spanish Literature from Georgetown University (Washington, D.C.), and a masters in library science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



The Relevance of the Public Library

by Andrea Telli (USA)

Is the public library an institution whose time has come when in this second decade of the 21st century our collective way of life, ability to independently access information, and opportunity to engage with one another has been challenged by a global pandemic and social unrest? Or are public libraries now more important than ever before? With the challenges and impact of a limitless stream of information, populations have been empowered by divisive national leaders with still others inspired by movements for social and economic justice. Along with technological advances that have made information accessible, and indeed the creation of information, *available* to all – we are beckoned and inspired at the public library to ensure it is *accessible* to all.

In 2019, Chicago Public Library (CPL) became one of the largest systems in the U.S. to eliminate overdue fines. It was a decision that was encouraged and championed by our frontline staff whose real-time interactions saw firsthand the impact of fines on our users. Increasingly, we heard stories of patrons blocked from checking out books and using the library due to their fines. When materials became so overdue that the amounts owed seemed insurmountable, many patrons simply never returned the items and in turn never returned to the library, assuming they were barred from using any of the library's resources. We not only lost our materials to the existence

of these fines, but also our patrons and opportunity to impact important community connections and lifelong learning. As we looked deeper into fines and fees at CPL, we realized that those who were most often blocked from library access because of fines lived in communities beset with economic, educational and social struggles. About 25% were children and fully one third (1/3) were in Chicago's poorest communities. In other words, they were the people who would benefit most from the promise and potential of the public library. Conversely, while the overdue rates were equal in all areas of the city, those in more stable neighborhoods, not beset by unemployment, low educational attainment and rampant crime, had been able to pay their fines and continue using the library.

By removing the punitive measure of assessing fines for overdue items along with acknowledging that having the materials returned was much more important than fines we most certainly would never collect, we removed a critical barrier and leveled the playing field for our patrons no matter their life situation. In the months after we eliminated overdue fines, we saw materials long assumed lost forever returned, and more importantly, previously blocked patrons returning to their libraries.



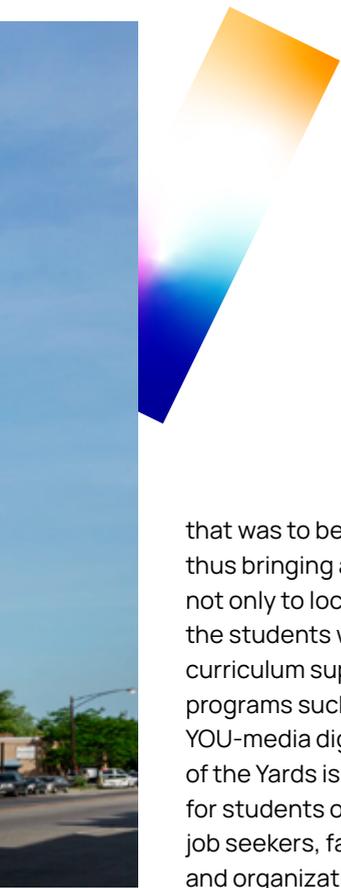
Independence Branch. Photo: Chicago Public Library.

Barriers to Access

Fines and fees were not our only barriers to access, however; and in 2013 we began experimenting with co-location models for our branch libraries. This was not the first-time library resources were paired with other community resources. For about 50 years at CPL, our focus was to embed free-standing branch libraries in every neighborhood in Chicago. A 'building boom' ensued in the 1990s and early 2000s, with robust capital funding and over 50 new libraries built or renovated. The economic collapse in 2008 affected our ability to continue to fund libraries using primarily municipal resources, so in order to continue to bring library services to under-served communities and refresh facilities constructed

in older models, we had to look for creative solutions such as partnering with schools and other city agencies, or looking to the philanthropic community for assistance.

Our first co-located facility was opened in a newly constructed high school on Chicago's Southwest Side in the Back of the Yards community, a neighborhood that historically served as the 'Butcher to the World', as so eloquently described by poet Carl Sandburg. Some meat-packing establishments remain, but the community is now largely populated by Spanish-speaking families who work in the light and medium industries that arose after the major packing plants closed. The neighborhood had been without a branch library for about three years and the mayor at the time, Rahm Emanuel, encouraged the creative solution of placing a neighborhood library in the space



that was to be the school library, thus bringing a full service branch not only to local residents, but also to the students who would benefit from curriculum support and unique library programs such as the award-winning YOU-media digital lab for teens. Back of the Yards is a vibrant community hub for students of all ages, immigrants, job seekers, families, local businesses, and organizations, and simply those seeking to read, learn and engage.

Based on the success of the Back of the Yards co-location, CPL sought to partner with other organizations to combine and activate resources. In 2017, we began a partnership with the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) to co-locate three library branches with affordable and mixed-use housing. Two of the facilities were constructed on the North Side of the city in the Independence Park and Northtown neighborhoods, where there was need for affordable housing, particularly for seniors, but not enough housing stock. The third location, in what has traditionally been called 'Little Italy', closer to the central area of the city, was constructed on land that had long been owned by the Chicago Housing Authority, but was in a community that was quickly growing and needed redevelopment.

Specific Architecture for the Community

The success of these projects in garnering development, funding and community support was in the architecture. The City of Chicago and CPL engaged world-class architectural firms in a competition to design and build the facilities to bring exceptional architecture to residential communities outside of Chicago's downtown area. These mixed-use buildings fulfilled a purpose that librarians and supporters have highlighted as a central part of modern libraries for years: that a library is above all a community space.

In all three cases, the libraries occupy the ground floor of the facility with the housing above. The Independence and Northtown buildings are senior housing facilities, with the apartments in Little Italy specified for families. Communal meeting spaces are available to the library, the building residents and the community, and serve as spaces not only for story times and book discussions, but for voting, health screenings, resident meetings, community policing events, among many others.

Now, seniors who might have been socially isolated from their communities find community right in their living space, and children and families experience the library as an integral and integrated part of their community: it's where we learn, where we shop, where we dream, where we live. Each of the three CPL/CHA locations have become vibrant community resources. The Northtown Community is home to Chicago's Orthodox Jewish community and is open 7 days a week to accommodate the Sabbath for the residents. In addition, it has a very large immigrant population who regularly use the library to access citizenship and other social service resources. Independence Branch has become a haven for the senior residents who live above the library and have made it a daily part of their routine and feel it a part of their home. Independence Branch serves with intergenerational programs that incorporate the needs of the young families living in the nearby homes as well as the high number of students who use the facility after school. Little Italy Branch serves not only the housing residents who have been on or near the site for three generations or more, but also the new families moving into an active, urban area that is growing both economically and in population and influence.



Northtown Branch. Photo: Chicago Public Library.



Independence Branch. Photo: Chicago Public Library.

The Future: Evolving Libraries

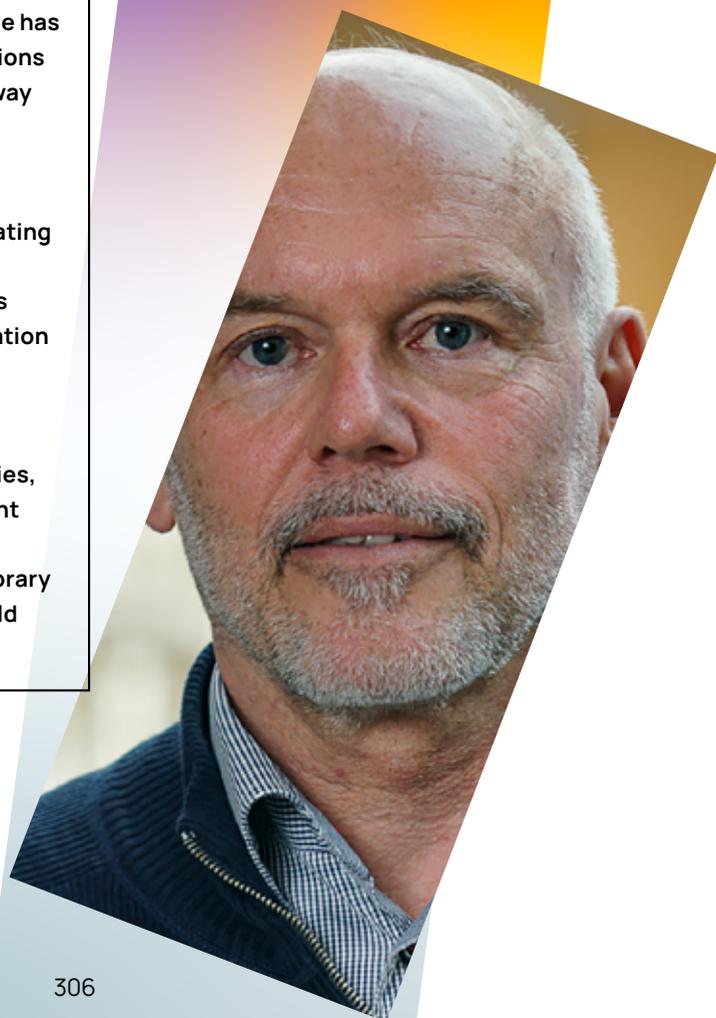
In the 2020s, libraries will continue to change the way their physical spaces exist within their communities. Gone are the days of quiet, dark stacks filled with whispering readers and librarians waiting to be asked questions. Today's library is no longer a one-way street but a thriving intersection where librarians listen to their communities and adapt to their needs while also finding that the skills and knowledge of our users bring peer-to-peer, neighbor-to-neighbor, and community-to-community opportunities that went undiscovered in the previous one-way model.

Are libraries needed more than ever before? Are they adaptable? Are they relevant? The answer perhaps is not found in current thought, but in a concept put forth over 100 years ago. In 1917, CPL's Chief Librarian Henry Legler called for a constantly evolving system of library branches in Chicago that, as he put it, 'so epitomizes the spirit of democracy'. His words are as true today as they were over a century ago. As we welcome the new decade and its unexpected challenges, CPL and libraries worldwide will continue to transform as an evolving system that supports our need to read, learn, discover, and engage.

About the author

Rolf Hapel is currently Affiliate Instructor at Information School at University of Washington following a two year tenure as Professor of Practice under the 'Distinguished Practitioner in Residence'-program, 2018-2020. He was Director of Citizens' Services and Libraries in Aarhus, Denmark from 2006-2018 and City Librarian from 1994-2006. He is librarian by education and hold a master's degree in Digitization and Public Administration from 2014. He has served as librarian, deputy manager, city librarian and director in four Danish cities.

Rolf has been chairman of numerous steering groups, committees, and boards, has numerous articles on aspects of library development, and is an international renowned speaker on library development and transformation. He has served as expert in architectural competitions for new city libraries in the capitals of Norway and Finland and worked with four different international foundations as advisor in the library field. Among recent work tasks was heading the *Danish Digital Library* coordinating body, initiating and planning the series of biannual *Next Library conferences* that has put Aarhus on the map as one of the innovation hotspots of international librarianship, co-heading the development of the *Design Thinking Toolkit for Libraries* with the commissioner of the Chicago Public Libraries, Brian Bannon, and heading the development and realisation of the main library, *Dokk1*, opened in Aarhus in 2015. The acclaimed library was awarded Library of the year at the World Library and Information Congress 2016.



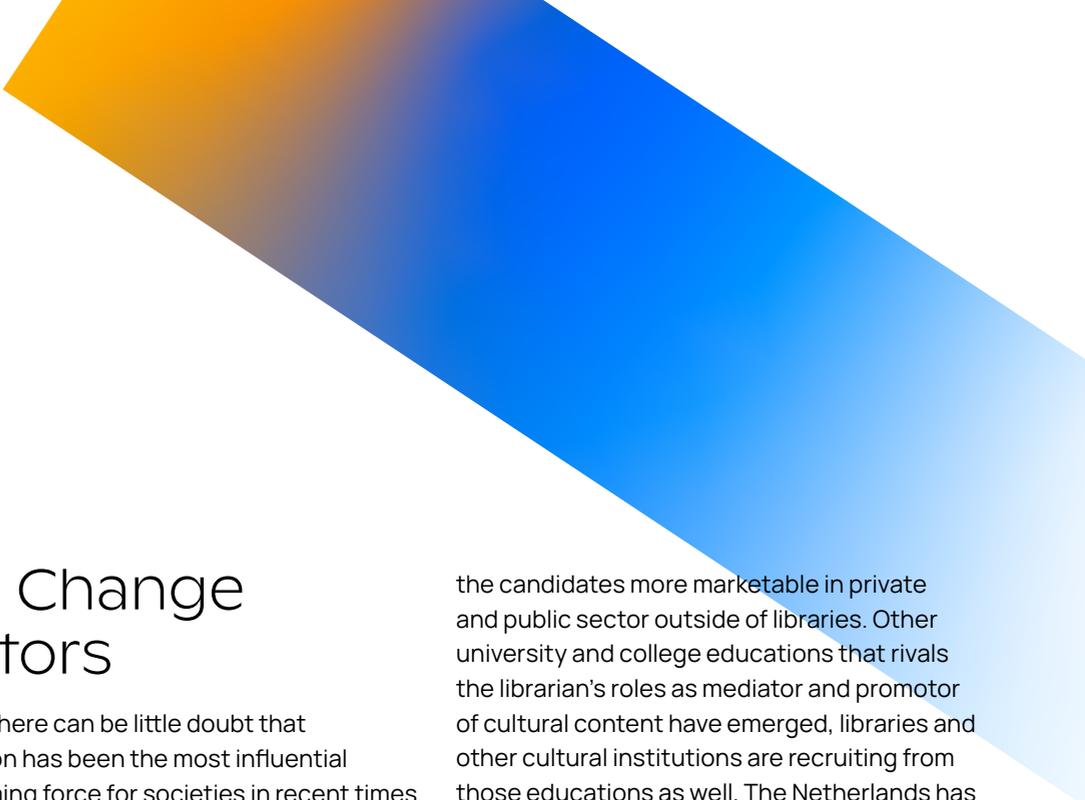
Library Education 2020

by Rolf Hapel, University
of Washington (USA)

After long active career in Denmark as librarian, library deputy director, and Citizens' Services and Libraries director in Aarhus where I served as occasional censor, advisory board member, and guest lecturer at the Royal School of Library And Information Science, I have had the privilege of teaching master students in library and information science as Professor of Practice from 2018 to 2020 at a top ranked iSchool at University of Washington in Seattle. The experiences from my active career, my discussions in my international network, and my time at UW iSchool have of course prompted a number of thoughts on the current state of education in the library field. Looking broadly and internationally on library education, it is certainly lack of education of library staff that is the major problem, the absence of access to thorough training programs and well-developed curricula, particularly in developing countries, provides an impenetrable barrier despite strong efforts from IFLA and regional library associations to mitigate the consequences of such challenges. However, this article does not focus on the lack of education that is a problem in many countries, it will instead concentrate on some of the questions that I personally have experienced as manager and director and as teacher interacting with the library field in both northern Europe and North America. I have been thinking about questions relating to library education along the lines of: Are current iSchool curricula reflecting the needs of the field, is the

education of library workers adequate and up to date, are iSchools interacting sufficiently with library practice, will the education and learning of the students help libraries stay relevant in the long run? In order to try to answer those questions, one has to look at the larger picture of society development and the role that the libraries play in the societal fabric and the communities they serve. I have to make a few alerts: 1) Though I pride myself in being relatively empathic, reasonably well read, and fairly broadly oriented, I cannot deny that I am a more than middle aged white cis-gender male of privilege, therefore my experiences and understanding of the world has been formed from that position, 2) when I write 'library' in the following, I mainly refer to public libraries, 3) I make a distinction between librarians who can work in all kinds of organizations but hold an MLIS degree (Master of Library Science) and library workers who are occupied in public libraries and might have an MLIS or other type of education.

That said, what are then developments that are relevant to discuss when it comes to libraries and education?



The Change Factors

There can be little doubt that digitization has been the most influential transforming force for societies in recent times and that libraries in most countries are among the institutions that has been directly affected from the beginning. Many libraries have embraced the opportunities in the changing landscape of globally and rapidly evolving information technologies and upcoming social media. The abundance of readily and easily available information and data delivered through increasingly developed broad band networks, soon to become 5G, and the intense fight for attention by all information providers and mediators, has spurred libraries to engage in change processes with profound effects on library services, programs, organization, the spatial layout, the job content and the education of library staff. Digitization might also to a certain degree have resulted in a dwindling market for librarians in public libraries that have cut positions over the last three decades. The content of library education is similarly undergoing quite radical changes as more emphasis has been placed on the information science component in the education, data architecture, human/computer interaction, digital development and on modern cultural formats which makes

the candidates more marketable in private and public sector outside of libraries. Other university and college educations that rivals the librarian's roles as mediator and promotor of cultural content have emerged, libraries and other cultural institutions are recruiting from those educations as well. The Netherlands has taken this development even further, where there no longer seems to be a specific and dedicated librarian education on universities or iSchools. Whether or not that absence will have a negative long-term effect on the Dutch public libraries remains to be seen. But there are other factors than just digitization and tech development influencing libraries and education. Two aspects of the socio-political consequences of globalization are also affecting the field. One is the dynamics of capitalism, e.g. outsourcing production industry resulting in increasing inequalities in wealth and income distribution and loss of jobs in several countries in the Western hemisphere causing ruptures in the social fabric, diminishing the traditional middle-class, and growing a 'precariat' of people in temporary jobs, living in relative poverty under conditions without predictability or security. Another is the wars and sometimes intolerable living conditions in a number of non-Western societies that has resulted in streams of refugees and immigrants from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds with different needs and desires, hopes and aspirations.

Both of these developments are constituting new challenges for library activities in most of the Western World.

But change lies not only in 'objective' factors like digitization, socio/political challenges or climate change, change is also spurred by the intersubjective ideas, stories, and institutions, that we as humans imagine and believe in. Therefore, the very idea that libraries as institutions need to change has a self-promoting effect, inspiring libraries to develop and conduct experiments.

Whether one or another of these factors are more impactful on library practice is a matter of debate, but they surely all affect how libraries can and should operate. Thus, the old business model of the library of the industrial society should change. The dependency on physical artifacts like books as the primary information carriers and optimizing workflow concerning collections and circulation is hardly a viable solution for keeping the libraries relevant in a longer perspective and changes has to have profound effects for the training and education of library staff.

Tradition and Development

Does the rapid societal change mean that existing curricula in library education have to be rejected? No, making order and sense in data and information will also be a central part of librarianship in the future and the need for professionals with such competences is not limited to libraries, any modern large information based organization - private or public sector alike - requests skills in the information domain, therefore expertise and know-how in knowledge management and information organization and structures will always be in demand in a wide variety of workplaces. Understanding the basics of data curation, cataloging, classification, metadata, taxonomies, thesauri, ontologies, semantic relationships, and indexing are at the center of library education as is knowledge about information resources, data bases, services, and collection development - analog and digital. What is trending and relatively new in library education, is an increasing focus on non-western knowledge systems, in USA particularly on indigenous knowledge organizations systems, expressing the cultures and artifacts of indigenous peoples.

Other traditional elements of library education that should be kept, but reimaged and developed are centered around literature



and reading, the book is alive and well and increasingly available in digital formats. Literature and storytelling are finding new ways of presentation both analog and digital and reading remains an absolutely essential skill for citizens in the 21st century, therefore library education needs to address for example readers' advisory services for contemporary adult and children's fiction and non-fiction including interpersonal and marketing skills necessary to promote reading including reading advocacy, readers' advisory interviewing, writing advisory annotations, presenting book talks and story times, and conducting book discussion groups and writers workshops.

There are less 'technical' and more value based, yet equally important parts of library education that any serious educational institution must attend to in curriculum development. Concepts, ideas, and legislation concerning intellectual property, privacy, intellectual freedom, and freedom of speech have for a long time been part of library education in the Western World, reflecting core values of librarianship. As a consequence of such values, social/ethical courses regarding social justice, equity, racism, inclusion, and diversity has for some time been part of the education, particularly in USA, with the growing attention to structural racism and the huge inequalities in income and wealth distribution in the society.

So, where are the new developments in library education? In the following I will address a couple of themes that in my view should be part of any modern MLIS education.

Community Engagement

As I am writing this article, the pandemic is still very much a reality, making a major impact on societies worldwide, posing enormous economic challenges and deepening the inequalities of income and wealth in most countries, particularly in countries where inequity and weak social structures are already significant challenges. In many communities libraries have been creative and inventive during this modern plague, a variety of new digital services has been launched and analogue presence have found new and secure formats but the challenges of facilitating knowledge creating in the local communities (Lankes, 2011) and in the process serving and promoting diversity, inclusion and equity will be even more important for libraries to address in the aftermath of the pandemic. Community Engagement, – ways and strategies for library workers to identify effective community-building approaches and techniques that can be used by libraries and information agencies today – is a trending element professional discourse library in USA



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and Canada (e.g. ALA 2020), and it will be even more important in the future. Traditional library outreach programs have had a library centric perspective, providing the public with balanced and objective information and programs, chosen, and curated by the library. At best, libraries obtain feedback on analysis and decisions through outreach – but when libraries move their community engagement towards involvement, collaboration, and empowerment, the perspective shifts. Processes of participation and partnerships become central, the user and citizen perspectives are in focus. Problem formulation and decision making are shared concerns, and libraries find themselves experimenting in handing over the decision making and leadership to the communities served (e.g. Working Together Project, 2008). New practices in libraries aiming at mitigating, alleviating, and counteracting the negative spiral of disconnection and mistrust through programming. Such services are spreading and becoming more common, informed by insights from social sector research. Concepts like community engagement, community building, civic

participation, social capital, archival activism, and public involvement, are spreading in the library sector through articles and conference papers and there seems to be a sense of 'newness' and energy, even excitement, connected to the very idea of community engagement. Successful partnerships are critical for authentic community engagement and any library education should explore in detail the challenges and opportunities in those relationships. So, any curriculum should address questions like: What are the skills necessary to be truly engaged with our communities? Which tools and formats, analogue and digital, can be utilized to foster connections and build trust? How can spaces and place making foster and amplify community building? How do we determine those attributes and ensure that library and information staff are developing skills and a mindset of equity, inclusion, and diversity in their education and training? Community engagement is a key role for the 21st century library or information agency and education should create a framework for librarians to be key players and collaborators in their communities.

21st Century Skills

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------|
| 1. Critical thinking | } | Learning skills |
| 2. Creativity | | |
| 3. Collaboration | | |
| 4. Communication | | |
| 5. Information literacy | } | Literacy skills |
| 6. Media literacy | | |
| 7. Technology literacy | | |
| 8. Flexibility | } | Life skills |
| 9. Leadership | | |
| 10. Initiative | | |
| 11. Productivity | | |
| 12. Social skills | | |

Two Important Trends

To be able to act and interact meaningfully in increasingly hypercomplex and sophisticated societies, citizens are bound to acquire skills beyond everyday know-how and academic knowledge. In response to this need, some organizations have developed frameworks for 21st century skills. Though somewhat varying, there seems to be consensus on describing the skills in three groups, learning skills, literacy skills, and life skills. Libraries could increase their societal role by developing both digital and analog formats for citizens to train such skills. An endeavor which in the first place requires the libraries to recruit and teach staff to possess (some of) those skills.

Erosion of civic engagement?

The cure?

From	To
Informing	Involving
Giving access to information	Facilitating exchange and sharing
Alienation to politics	Civic engagement
Consumers of democracy	Active participants
Eroding social capital	Building social coherence
'Their problem'	'Our problem'
Expert domain	Public domain
Concerns	Opportunities

Any democratic society is faced with a variety of economic, moral, and political issues and social challenges: Improving schools, expanding job opportunities, battling racism, combating crime, reducing poverty, fighting inequity. The need for civic discourse and civil engagement in creating the solutions has never been more important and the libraries have the potential to further support and facilitate democratic discourse and civic commitment in new formats. The role of the librarian therefore could be facilitator of civic discourse and organizer of democratic debate, advocating civility and championing community engagement.

A part of the broader community engagement is civic engagement aiming at fostering citizenship and public debate. This aspect seems to prevail more noticeably in North European libraries, where in recent years mission statements in public library legislation in Norway, Finland, and The Netherlands have explicitly mandated libraries to initiate democratic discourse and debate. In Denmark, a similar movement although not reflected (yet) in the library legislation has been partly spurred by close cooperation, and sometimes mergers, between libraries and citizens services, offering one-stop-shops for public services. In the library sectors of both the United States and the United Kingdom, community engagement generally seems to revolve more around issues of social and racial equity, diversity, and inclusion than so far has been the case in Scandinavian libraries – undoubtedly due to the deeper, more difficult, and very visible societal challenges and the weaker public sector social service network, especially in the United States. US libraries are furthermore often among the first responders to large emergencies such as heatwaves, wildfires, and flooding, providing shelter and sometimes temporary accommodation, as well as offering safe places for people experiencing homelessness and poverty. Although the formal learning institutions and iSchools might not be able to prepare students for all disasters and social breakdowns, a thorough education in



Community Engagement – children debating news with expert panel. Photo: Dokk1, Aarhus Libraries.

community engagement theory and practices will go a long way in prepping MLIS students for work in real life settings.

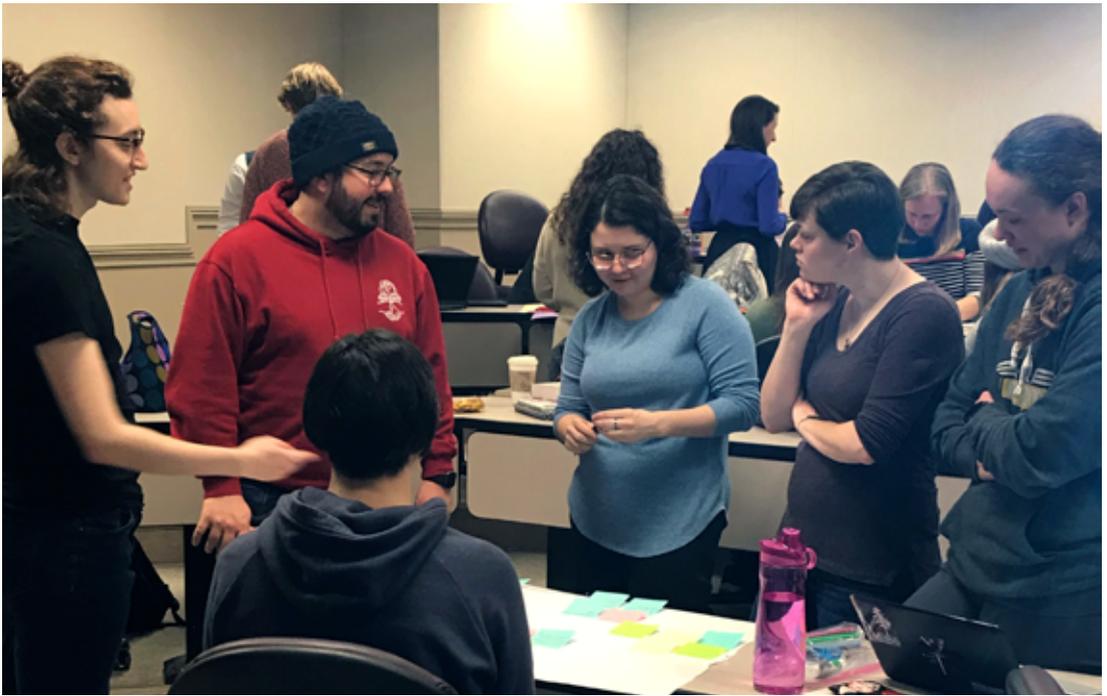
Design Thinking

Another emerging and probably lasting result of adapting library practices to the pandemic is the increased focus on digital services. From being a set of services that often has been regarded as complementary to the analog services of book-lending and in-person programs at the library, the digital activities became the primary way, if not the only, of reaching the public – at least for a period of time. Interestingly, it is not only the provision of curated digital content and eBooks for external providers and publishers that has flourished, judging from announcements and news releases from both American and European libraries it has become clear that a number



of libraries have ramped up their efforts towards becoming digital content producers. An abundance of digital, live story times, online courses, podcasts, talks, panel debates, and other digital formats have been launched, organized, and sometimes performed by library staff. In that way, the pandemic has become a catalyst of creation and ingenuity in many libraries. It would be frustrating, though, if life threatening and incomprehensible occurrences like the pandemic was the only prerequisite for accelerating major changes in the library sector. Luckily, there are other ways of fostering necessary change in the library sector, one of them is to make Design Thinking part of the education for librarianship. Design thinking and methods of design is becoming a more household part of vocabulary and repertoire in businesses and organizations around the globe and has in recent years also entered the practical library world, a development partly spurred by the Design Thinking Toolkit for Libraries (2015). Though librarians and library workers have designed artifacts, tools, and systems in libraries for centuries, it is only fairly recently that the mindset and the inquiry methods of what we call design thinking have entered the practice. The iSchool at UW has been teaching Design Methods for Librarianship for some time and the course is still developing. Why is a design thinking mindset important for librarianship? Well, libraries are not singular institutions,

they are part of a cohesive institutional and organizational network and exist in a social fabric of stakeholders in an environment where development and disruption occur in a multitude of ways. Librarians of today cannot rely only on traditional library skills; they must acquire competencies and techniques allowing them not only to deal with new opportunities and challenges for the libraries but actually create the future by designing it. Hence, a curriculum for Design Thinking could and should be aimed at creating an understanding of the the value of design thinking in today's changing library environments and developing a broader view of the possibilities in the role of the librarian as designer. To be familiarized with foundational design theories relevant for professional library practice and being able to use selected design methods at a basic level of competence, such as stakeholder analysis, scenario building, personas, storyboarding, paper prototyping, usability evaluation and other methods should be part of the learning objectives, demonstrating the ability to ideate, synthesize, evaluate, select, and present design ideas through basic design techniques. The ability to frame, analyze, and discuss common practices in librarianship in terms of design (for example practices related to collection development policies; the reference interview; organization of physical spaces for reading, making, and group discussion; signage; online reference catalogs; search



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interfaces, digital formats and services) is equally relevant knowledge and competences for librarians as change agents. Common values and concepts of librarianship and their importance for informing and framing design e.g. social justice, privacy, service, inclusion, accessibility, preservation, rationality, learning, pleasure, are crucial elements for fostering agency and the ability to act and perform as a professional. General methods in design (e.g., semi-structured interview, scenario, affinity diagram, storyboard, wireframe, low-fidelity prototyping) should be part of the tools that library workers command and reflections on stakeholder roles in design processes, particularly the need for inclusiveness and diversity when consulting stakeholders' needs, must be at the forefront of the mindset of any modern and well-educated library worker. For many introvert library students, the appreciation of the iterative and reflective nature as well as embracing the messiness, change and the unexpected elements of design can in my experience have a truly liberating effect.

Librarianship and Institutions

There are differences in practices and visions about libraries and the educational needs of the institutions reflecting the diversity of societies, cultures, and local communities all over the world. There will be multiple paths for libraries to follow in the endeavor to stay relevant for the community they are serving but there is not much doubt in my mind that citizen oriented participative and collaborative community engagement has come to stay. As for the educational institutions related to librarianship, the universities and iSchools and the universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen), I do believe that tradition of Library and Information Science, emphasizing a user-focused mindset, civil liberties and data privacy provides strong values to build upon. Librarianship should distinguish itself from computer science, not by ignoring the power of data or the importance of data-driven evidence, but by building on a humanistic



Design Thinking Workshop in the library. Photo: Dokk1, Aarhus Libraries.

approach and acknowledging that the idea of data driven evidence as a solution to all of society's problems is absurd, that there's more to librarianship than a reductionistic thinking based on bits, bytes, and algorithms. Librarianship is a bridge between humanities and data science, therefore it should embrace ethical and moral questions, not only asking what data *can* be used for, but also ask what data *should* be used for, in order not to be harmful to individuals or society as a whole. Librarianship should call attention to the contents of our common beliefs and imaginary stories, promoting a critical view not only to fake news and false 'facts', but also to seemingly 'neutral' algorithms that hold just as many human assumptions, worldviews, priorities, and biases as any other human tale, fictional or not. After all, a traditional western-centric world view seems to be not enough to solve societal and environmental challenges in all communities, hence understanding and appreciation of different knowledge systems deriving from other cultures should be part of curricula.

Skillssets of professional library workers will have to encompass the ability to work with partners and volunteers, to co-create and co-design the practices, programs, and services that will evolve. Therefore, design thinking theories and practices have to be part of curriculum, as do community engagement theories from social sciences. Few organizations are better suited than public libraries to be facilitators of informed community engagement processes, as they in practice and culture are reflecting values of inclusion, social and racial justice, equity, appreciation of human dignity, free access to information, intellectual freedom and democracy with no commercial interests or moral or political bias. Librarianship is about individuals and communities seeking out and acting upon information, thus creating knowledge. The need of educational support for these values and activities is obvious and the curricula of iSchools and other educational institutions should reflect this development.

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About the author

Barbara Lison is IFLA President-Elect and Director of Bremen Public Library, Germany. Barbara is an experienced librarian with more than 30 years in leadership positions. She has served as President of Bibliothek Information Deutschland, the national umbrella organization of German library and information associations, and as President of the German Library Association, DBV. She was member of the Executive Committee of the European Bureau for Libraries, Archives and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA), including Vice-President. For several terms, she was also in the IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) Governing Board and will be President of this world organization 2021-2023. Barbara has been very active in library policy and development. She was a member of the Bertelsmann Foundation PLIN (Public Library International Network). In recent years, Barbara has worked for Goethe-Institut as an expert on library affairs. She is a member of the OCLC Board of Trustees.



Photo: b.i.t.online, Vera Münch.

Seven Flashlights on the State of Art of German Public Libraries

by
Barbara Lison (Germany)

Germany is a federative state of more than 83 million inhabitants of which around 20 percent have a migrant background. The 16 German States are guaranteed an autonomy in cultural and educational matters which leads to a rather diverse landscape in the policies for education, culture and for science. Consequently, national strategies in these fields are very rare and the financing of these political fields is dependent on state subsidies or local budgets. Also Germany's around 2,000 public libraries (with professional staff) are part of this diverse landscape, and I have to say that their successes would be even greater if they would get support as well as resources on a national level. The German Library Association is aiming at filling this gap and their good work can at least partly compensate this political gap.

With my seven flashlights I will briefly touch some of the hottest topics which currently are on the agenda of many public libraries in Germany. All these flashlights indeed are Janus-faced: they are challenges as well as opportunities:

Flashlight 1: Covid-19



Photo: Stadtbibliothek Bremen.

The Covid-19 pandemic is having an impact on all aspects of our lives, economies, and societies at large. Most of Germany's public libraries reacted very quickly and wisely by a shutdown of their premises around the middle of March and then organizing different online- and offline services for their patrons. There was a great commitment of the staff which also resulted in a real outburst of newly invented

digital services. Some of the classic analogue programs like storytelling and other events for children and parents were shifted to a digital format. The e-book lending strongly increased – in several libraries by 30 and more percent – and some libraries directed a much greater share of their acquisition budget to e-media. By May the pandemic situation in Germany had improved and many public libraries started to carefully reopen their premises for the patrons. Naturally, all the hygienic and safety requirements have been observed like limiting the opening hours and the number of customers in the library, asking them to wear a mask, some libraries even stored the returns in quarantine. And fortunately, the library's functions as a 3rd place and an environment for learning and communication still is re-installed again to comply the rules of physical distancing and reducing the risk of contagion. These measures are creating decreasing performance outcome and financial losses – but this is not the main reason for the staff in public libraries to return to the 'normal' library services – it's their commitment to be an open and welcoming space again.

Flashlight 2: Commitment to Diversity



Project 360 Degrees. Photo: Stadtbibliothek Bremen.

German public libraries have always been unbiased institutions in orienting their services to the benefit of the general public. Still, most of their patrons are naturally born Germans, and certainly most of their staff members is. Therefore the services of the public libraries do not always meet well the interests and demands of the migrant population in Germany, let alone some parts of this population do not use or, even worse, do not know the services of the public libraries. There are many attempts by the librarians to overcome this shortcoming and some of them are very effective. In order to support libraries and other cultural institutions in

- 1 kulturstiftung-des-bundes.de
- 2 **Project 360 Degrees** kulturstiftung-des-bundes.de

these activities, the German Federal Cultural Foundation¹ initiated a four-year nationwide project called '360 Degrees'² in which also ten public libraries are participating to develop sustainable strategies and measures to improve their role as important actors for diversity. The project has a broader scope and addresses diversity issues in the fields of staff, programming and public. Surely, this is not the only effort of public libraries to be a welcoming place for all groups in our society; it is just the most prominent one. Complying with diversity issues and requirements is of course an ongoing process for the libraries. Already, a big wave of such activities to support the migrant population in Germany was organized by the public libraries when in 2015-16 more than 1,5 million refugees arrived in our country due to the civil war in Syria and to other crisis situations in the Middle East, Afghanistan and North Africa.



Flyers on SDG 2030 policy. Photo: Stadtbibliothek Bremen.

Flashlight 3: Sustainability and the UN 2030 Goals

When the UN in 2015 – five years ago already – had adopted the Agenda 2030 with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) immediately initiated a new program, IAP – The International Advocacy Program – which is designed to promote and support the role of libraries in achieving these SDGs. Through the German Library Association, the German public libraries were called on to engage themselves in achieving at least some of the SDGs and use this fact as a promotional tool to corroborate the importance of public libraries in many

societal aspects. By now, many public libraries are aware of this opportunity to present their services to the public and the political decision makers as an important contribution to a successful holistic implementation of the SDGs. Their programs for school children and nursery school children, their material and services to support environmental sustainability, their role as reliable information provider and agent in the digital environment, as supporter of democratic structures and development, as prominent cultural institution in urban development, and also their role in supporting all aspects of diversity describe only a selection of the whole spectrum how libraries are contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. And of course, the task of being or becoming a 'green library' is an important task as well. Many library buildings are not really fit for meeting the challenges of the climate change, and the local authorities do not always set priorities in the sustainability of the public buildings. But there are also changes within the organization itself to act as a 'green library'; it mostly depends on the awareness of the management and the staff.

Flashlight 4: Library Legislation

Germany is one of the few European Union countries that does not have a national library legislation. Against the background of the constitutionally guaranteed autonomy in cultural and educational matters to the 16 Federal States, all striving of the Library Association for a German Library Law so far has been fruitless. There indeed exist State related library laws in six (Thuringia, Saxony-Anhalt, Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Schleswig-Holstein, North Rhine-Westphalia) of the 16 States, but most of them do not touch the real core of a library law which is the obligation to establish library services in each local community and to furnish public libraries and academic libraries with the necessary resources for their services. The most recent State law for libraries is the most effective one: it is the Law for the Invigoration of Libraries; Bibliothekstärkungsgesetz³ in the State of North Rhein-Westphalia. This law not only appropriately describes and acknowledges the functions of a modern library, it also draws an important consequence for the development of public libraries: the legal possibility for a regular opening of public libraries on Sundays. Why is this so important? So far public libraries were not allowed to have regular opening hours on Sundays. This is the regulation of a statewide

law which prescribes the so called 'Sunday rest' forbidding any labor on Sundays and Public Holidays. Of course, there is a long list with exceptions from this Sunday rest to keep our society 'alive'; this list enumerates several cultural institutions like museums, theatres, cinemas, and ACADEMIC libraries. But it does not contain PUBLIC libraries and therefore they are not allowed to open their doors on Sunday. This deficit has been discussed for more than 20 years now, but the resistance of the Union and some political misunderstanding of the functions of a modern public library prevented a reform of this national law so far. Now this State law in North Rhine-Westphalia is the first step into the right direction. It describes the functions of a public library as a cultural institution for access to information, lifelong learning, as an institution which supports reading and media literacy as well as a place for social and cultural exchange, for development of democratic decision-making and equal participation. All these functions shall be accessible also on Sundays. But unfortunately, the Union is now planning to file a suit against this law.

One of the basic tasks for public libraries still is the lending of books and other materials. And naturally, this act of lending is only possible based on appropriate copyright and lending right legislation. But this legislation is only valid regarding physical, analogue

books, not with regard to e-books. Therefore, German Public libraries are struggling with the publishers who totally are in control of the acquisition policies for public libraries. The publishers prescribe the content of the respective licenses, they limit the availability of the e-books and even ban the availability of bestsellers for the libraries for a period of six months based on a system called 'windowing'. Up to now both the publishers and the German Library Association have not come to an approximation nor has national legislation been established which could solve this problem.

Flashlight 5: Recruitment and Education of Suitable Staff

Staff is the most important asset for public libraries. A library without staff is a body without a heart; this saying of an Asian colleague still is right. No digital devices, no digitized media, no robot can replace a human being who is dedicated to the service of the library patrons. Of course, especially within the last twenty years the library profession has undergone a series of severe changes and has experienced new challenges which never have been occurred in the history of librarianship.



Photo: dbv, Thomas Meyer, Ostkreuz.

This has also caused a fundamental change in the skills which are demanded from the people working in a library. Universally available information – ‘with a click of your fingertips’ in principle is no longer a monopoly of libraries and other memory institutions – the internet and digitized information carriers now do the job. Therefore, librarians are less the ‘owners and organizers’ but rather the ‘intermediaries’ of information. Their role is also to support in the development of the media competence of the public, especially in the younger generations. Thus, some of the most essential attributes demanded in the library profession are now communicative and social skills, combined with a striving for (not only technical) innovation and development. Unfortunately, these new

requirements are not fully known by those people – young or more experienced – who could fulfill these demands. Therefore, many German public libraries are experiencing a deficit of staff complying with these essential demands for social personal skills. What may be the reason? Unfortunately, the problem is the still broadly present image of the library profession as a profession for those people who love a job in the back-office, being more focused on books than on people and in general are rather backward-looking, let alone being interested in modern technology and management. The big challenge now is to change this image to become an attractive job opportunity for the people who are so urgently needed in our libraries. On the one hand-

side this is a task for the library associations who have already perceived the cause for this dilemma and are now trying to improve the image of the profession. And, since their financial resources are not large enough to start a nationwide image campaign like other professions have done, e.g. the craftsmen or the army, the associations have to be very inventive and execute small steps on the way to make the library profession a popular job opportunity for the right people. On the other hand-side every single librarian can contribute to the improvement of the image of the profession in becoming an outspoken future-oriented role-model by showing innovative behavior and practices as well as demonstrating the necessary social skills and personality. And fortunately, many of our colleagues have been meeting this challenge. But there still is quite a gap to overcome to convincingly renewing the image of the library profession.

Flashlight 6: Mission as Supporter of a Democratic Society



Photo: Deutscher Bundestag, Achim Melde.

German public libraries derive their duties and assignments from the democratic principles of the German Constitution. Therefore, they are committed to the mission of supporting a democratic, enlightened society with well-educated citizens. One decisive prerequisite for this enlightened society is that information is accessible freely and that information is true and reliable.

In this generally well known and well accepted context I want to highlight a recent effort of the German public libraries how to deal with this challenge. In an age of digital media and social media channels when the possibilities of creating and consuming information have become so manifold and so easy, it has also become rather difficult to distinguish reliable and unreliable information sources. From this ambiguous circumstance originates the task for public libraries to support media competency and media literacy. The buzzword of 'fake news' which mostly is the deliberate spread of misinformation, presents the whole spectrum of misleading news, mainly with the purpose to damage a person, social groups or a political environment or system. Public libraries have taken up this topic and are now more and more focusing their efforts on the support of media competence, onto the mechanisms and procedures to disclose the practices and feints called 'fake news'. They are working together with journalists' associations which pursue the same target. Mainly in cooperation with schools they try to illuminate pupils and young students – whose attachment to social media channels is especially strong – how to deal with the information on these channels and how to discern quality information from 'fake news'.

Flashlight 7: The Digital Environment

Already more than 30 years ago modern technology has created integrative and highly needed sets of tools for the work and services of public libraries. This is an ongoing development and with the ever faster change in innovation and with shorter and shorter innovation cycles, public libraries are more and more struggling with following the technical development without appropriate resources. Library management systems have shifted from sheer cataloguing and lending instruments to holistic management applications which are also apt for a wider use as customer relationship management tools. The content itself became digital with e-books, databases, and content portals, with streaming and internet-based content platforms, like Wikipedia. And the communication with the patrons more often takes place through the most popular social media channels. The next catalyst for a paradigm shift in the work and services of public libraries is already right among us: artificial intelligence, AI. How will the adaption and implementation of AI related tools influence our jobs, our services, our profession as a whole? There is no doubt about it that AI will bring about deep-seated changes also



Virtual Reality. Photo: Stadtbibliothek Bremen.

in the library world; we can already observe the gravity of these changes in other labor sectors already like industrial production, medicine, economy. And this is just the onset of these changes. Several AI applications are already in use in libraries – mainly in the academic sphere. Surely, also the public libraries are called upon to deal with the application of AI in their work and can learn from their academic colleagues. Main objectives in this context should be the benefit for the patrons and the benefit for the society at large. From these objectives arises the demand for a clear strategic positioning

of the library world for the future dealing with artificial intelligence. A substantial and really good starting point for this process of orientation and re-orientation are the 'OECD Principles on AI' of 2019⁴ which demand that dealing with artificial intelligence one shall respect human rights and democratic values and act on the basis of trustworthiness and credibility as well. It is high time that we start this process.

About the author

June Garcia is a library consultant in Denver, Colorado and has over 50 years professional involvement in public libraries. She served as head of branches for the Phoenix Public Library (Arizona, USA) for 12 years and director of the San Antonio Public Library (Texas, USA) for 6 years. For the past 18 years she has been a full-time consultant, working with over 100 libraries in the U.S. and internationally. She assisted over 65 libraries with executive searches and served as a consultant for the development of over 30 strategic plans for public libraries.

June was Network Coordinator for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation initiative to mentor young librarians from around the world and create a network of young innovators. For over 25 years she was active in the development of publications for the Public Library Association (PLA) to enable public librarians and trustees to effectively plan, measure and evaluate public library service and also served as President of the Public Library Association. In 2019 she was the recipient of the Melvil Dewey Medal from the American Library Association for many accomplishments during a long, varied, and distinguished career as a public library administrator, author, trainer, and consultant.



So, You Want to Be an Unicorn – The Quest to Become the Ideal Public Library Director

by June Garcia (USA)

In 1999, when I was a member of an international network established by the Bertelsmann Foundation, I co-authored a paper with Sue Sutherland titled *Public Library Administrators in the Political Arena*. The opening paragraphs of the paper stated:

'Few people entering the library profession anticipate their careers being directly affected by the governmental process. Those who plan to move into public library administration typically anticipate their challenges being library-related rather than politically related. They are surprised when they find that much, if not most of their time, is spent on issues seemingly unrelated to day-to-day library operations and played out in arenas away from the immediate library environment. These problems are often out of the library's control and might appear to be unrelated to library services.'

This reality is apparent to some librarians, especially those who work in larger library systems, and it also results in some very difficult decisions that many librarians face at some point in their career:

'Do I continue working as a children's librarian which brings me so much joy or do I become supervisor of the department? As a supervisor, I'll be able to take a lead role in shaping our services, but I'll spend less time working with the children, their parents, and teachers.'

'I love being a branch manager. Yes, I have supervisory duties, but I also get to work with the public every day. I'm also really engaged with other organizations in my community and we've collaborated on some wonderful programs. Do I really want to become an assistant director with an office downtown? Would I ever get to answer a reference question again or introduce a new author to a reluctant reader?'

'As an assistant director, I get to focus on library operations and work with our talented staff to develop and implement innovative services. Do I really want to be a library director where I'll be spending a lot of my time in meetings with local officials and community partners who often don't understand the importance of libraries?'

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. But those who aspire to be a public library director or wonder if it is the right path for them, should have a clear understanding of the attributes that effective library directors have.

In Search for the Unicorn

Over the past 18 years, I have assisted over 60 library boards or local governments in the United States search for and hire a new public library director. A critical first step in that search process is to determine what knowledge, skills, and abilities the new director should possess if she or he is to be successful. I do this by facilitating conversations with staff members, community residents, library board members, and elected and appointed officials. We discuss the organization's current conditions and where they hope and expect there be will changes in the next 5-10 years. This helps us then build consensus around the 'ideal director' or the 'unicorn' they hope to find.

Although there are some variations from community to community, it is amazing how similar the lists of attributes are. Of course, that doesn't mean that every community places equal value on each of the attributes. Local circumstances and conditions affect priorities.

If a library has just completed a strategic planning process, the people assessing a potential public library director may put less emphasis on the attributes associated with planning and more on the attributes relating to implementing a plan. That doesn't mean they don't value planning. It just means that the planning issue has been recently addressed and challenges associated with implementing that plan are much more immediate.

In the United States, it is common, and in some states required by law or regulation, that a library director has a Master's degree in Library Science or its equivalent. As a result, most hiring authorities take for granted that applicants with that degree have a basic understanding of library operations. They also assume that applicants have supervised various library departments in their current or previous jobs. The attributes that are most often used to describe the ideal public library director are listed below. The items on this list are not intended to be a job description, nor are they intended to describe the tasks a director performs. Rather, these are the attributes that hiring authorities have identified as important. As with any list, it is not exhaustive, and as you read through it, you might be thinking *why is this included or did you forget to include that*. If reading this list causes you to consider what is listed and what is missing, then it has served its purpose.



As you review the list below, keep in mind that no one excels in each of these attributes. Often a candidate is stronger in some areas and needs to strengthen his or her skills in another. That is only natural. It's all a matter of degree and how one has and will to continue to enhance one's skills and knowledge.

So, what are the attributes of the ideal public library director? In United States at least, the consensus of the staff, board, and community leaders with whom I have worked is that the ideal library director is:

1 an innovative and visionary leader

who creates and nurtures an environment in which excellence, innovation, and collaborative teamwork can thrive. He or she:

- develops and communicates a compelling vision of a modern public library, with services and programs responsive to community needs and interests
- has a knowledge of current trends and best practices in libraries
- uses library spaces in ways that make them locations for experimentation, innovation, education, recreation, and relaxation
- has a proven track record of managing change and fostering continuous improvement, including alternative service delivery methods
- exhibits intellectual curiosity and demonstrates a commitment to personal lifelong learning

2 a strategic thinker

who makes wise, fair, and timely decisions based on solid facts. She or he:

- thinks strategically and makes sound decisions under pressure
- is skilled in strategic planning and plan implementation
- understands and consistently uses effective measurement and evaluation methods to improve library operations and services for the public
- solves problems creatively

3 a communicator

who communicates openly, clearly, logically, and concisely and is an attentive and respectful listener. He or she:

- provides timely, accurate, and relevant information on critical issues to elected and appointed local officials, Library Trustees, library staff, colleagues, and the public
- serves as an effective, visible library spokesperson in the community
- communicates with community residents, library customers, and library staff with openness and responsiveness
- advocates passionately and effectively for the library, the services it provides, and the constituencies it serves

- interacts effectively with the media and is an eloquent and visible voice for the library in the community
- has a sense of humor

4 a community partner

who works collaboratively with elected and appointed officials, Library Trustees, library staff, library support groups, and key stakeholders to chart and execute the library's mission. She or he:

- has a high level of political astuteness in working with both elected and appointed officials at all levels of government and other key community stakeholders
- demonstrates cultural competence and has a history of responsiveness to community residents, library users, and library staff
- understands and values the diversity of people, cultures, and ideas and is committed to racial and social justice
- acts with a high level of integrity and develops relationships based on dependability and honesty
- is customer service-oriented
- is active in professional and civic organizations

5 a respected administrator

who demonstrates outstanding management skills. He or she:

- creates and maintains an organizational culture that embodies and values equity, diversity, and inclusion
- demonstrates a track record of effective fiscal management and budgetary planning
- engages effectively with all staff and empowers them with the authority and resources to carry out their responsibilities
- oversees the development of collections in multiple formats, physical and digital, to meet community needs
- oversees the maintenance of the library building and grounds to ensure that they are attractive, safe, and comfortable for all to use
- demonstrates a commitment to ethical behavior and to the core values of the library profession
- participates effectively in the library's private fundraising efforts

Obtaining the Necessary Attributes

One of the most striking things about the attributes above is that very few of them are things learned during one's professional library education. Only a few of them reflect the attributes needed by an entry-level librarian, or even first line supervisor, on a daily basis. This might lead one to wonder if individuals without formal library education can be a successful public library director. The answer, of course, is yes they can. However, in addition to possessing many of the attributes listed above, they would also need to acquire a basic understanding of library operations as well as the core values and tenets of public librarianship.

So, if you want to become a successful public library director, how do you obtain the necessary attributes? I suggest the following:

1 Review the lists of attributes again carefully.

Add anything you believe is missing and delete anything that you believe is irrelevant in your country. No list is sufficiently comprehensive or culturally sensitive to address the differences in public libraries worldwide. Share the list with colleagues; ask them what they would add or delete. Create a list that is relevant to your community or country.

2 Rate yourself on each of the attributes that are on your list.

Self-reflection is hard. Some of us look proudly on what we have already accomplished and tend to think quite highly of ourselves. Others focus on the gap between our performance and that of the well-known leaders in the field and judge ourselves too harshly. Neither approach is helpful, at least in this exercise. Be as honest as you can. Where do you excel? Where do you feel that you need improvement? As you review each attribute, think about specific examples of experiences you have had. Depending on your current and past library positions, there may be attributes that you have not utilized in your professional

life. However, you may have had non-library experiences that apply. It all counts. We are the sum total of all of our experiences; professional, community service, family, etc. This is the most important part of the process described in these five steps. You have to have an honest and objective understanding of where you are now before you can create a plan to move forward in the areas that are important to you in the future.

3 Prioritize the attributes that you need to develop or strengthen.

Everything on the list you developed in step 1 may be important, but not everything on your list is equally important. It's usually easier – and more effective – to make significant progress in two or three areas than it is to make minor progress in a dozen. The priorities you select will be depend on a number of circumstances. Generally, it makes the most sense to focus on the attributes that will enable you to be more successful in your current position and also make you a stronger candidate for your next job. You are more likely to make progress on developing your skills if you have a clear picture of the benefits you will receive as a result of your work.

4 Make a plan to strengthen your skills in key areas.

Good intentions are not a plan; wishful thinking is not a plan. You identify the most important things you want to address in step 3. If you're serious about enhancing your skills, create a written plan describing the specific actions you will take and the results you expect over the next 12 months. What do you want to accomplish? How are you actually going to do it? What is your target date for completion of each task or phase? How will you know if you were successful? Write it all down and look at it often. Remember there are lots of formal and informal ways of learning. You can attend classes, workshops, webinars, conferences, listen to TED Talks, or watch YouTube videos. You can read, talk to colleagues, observe others doing things well and think about what they did or said that made them successful. Discuss things with your mentor, if you are fortunate enough to have one, and learn from his or her experiences. If you don't have one ask a senior colleague to become one. Some things are best learned by doing. Participating in a strategic planning process for example will teach you things and reinforce others that you might never learn by reading a book or by talking to those who have done it. There is no one way to learn; figure out what works best for you to enhance the attribute in question. (5) Review

and revise your plan every three months. It's important to review your written plan on a regular basis and revise it as necessary. Find a way to keep your plan visible, not buried as a document on your computer. Consider setting reminders that will appear on your phone or create a wall chart that will allow you to check off what you've done so far. Do what works best for you to keep focused. Do not be afraid to make changes in the plan, but change them for the right reasons. Maybe you didn't identify 'understands and consistently uses effective measurement and evaluation methods to improve library operations and services for the public' as a priority for the next year. But if you are assigned to a team that is developing a new service, volunteer to take the lead on how the team will measure the use of the service and its effectiveness. This will give you practical experience that you might not otherwise be able to obtain. Adjust your plan and delete something else if necessary. As you review your plan every three months, remember to celebrate your accomplishments. At the end of your first year, go back through the steps above to see what should be added to your plan for the coming year.

A Very Rewarding and Demanding Job

If you undertake this process to become a successful public library director, there are a few things that you will want to remember. First and foremost, this is a journey, not a destination. Self-development is a continuous process. Effective leaders never stop growing, learning, and changing. Even the most successful library directors were not that successful or skilled on their first day as a library director. They will readily acknowledge that they've learned a lot over the years. The most honest amongst them will tell you they still have more to learn and that they are learning something new every day.

Be mindful that being a public library director is a very rewarding and demanding job. It is, however, quite different from the very important work that front-line librarians and their supervisors do every day. Setting out to be a successful director is a bit like the quest of looking for a unicorn. You might never become one, but the journey is worth the effort.



June Garcia at work in a leadership course for librarians in India.



About the author

Giuseppe Vitiello has been director of EBLIDA (European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation Associations) since 2019. From 1989 to 2018 he served as head of unit, program adviser and expert in various international organisations: European Commission, Council of Europe, ISSN International Centre, EU Institute of Security Studies and NATO Defense College.

Earlier in his carrier, Giuseppe acted as head R&D of the National Library in Florence and lectured at the Universities of Orléans and Toulouse. He also held visiting positions at the Hochschule der Medien in Stuttgart and the University of Venice. He has written six books and more than hundred articles on library & information science and the history of culture.



Library Policy and Planning in Europe

by Giuseppe Vitiello (Italy)

Ten years before the end of the second millennium, libraries in Europe seemed to rest on their laurels. Since the Second World War, they had been promoting democratic change, education and culture, reaching high levels of development. The UNESCO General Information Program, which started in 1977 and came to an end in 2000, had made great strides in encouraging library networking through the technical specifications and studies promoted within the Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC) and Universal Availability of Publications (UAP) programmes.¹ The vibrant state of library cooperation and networking at the end of the 20th century is well documented by the series 'Librarianship and information work worldwide' published by Bowker-Saur from 1991 to 2000.²

During the 1990s the European Commission also started to take an interest in libraries and triggered a series of significant activities which would shape the library world for more than a decade. Exchange of data and circulation of library materials were well supported by the European Commission. The EC programme funded the implementation of projects concerning integrated library systems, national and regional library catalogues, interlibrary loan systems as well as data transfer from publishers to libraries.³ Networking was the buzz word and this was well demonstrated in the United States, where four library networks allowed for shared cataloguing



The Jean Monnet Building, European Commission, Luxembourg, where the EC-funded 'Telematics for Libraries' programme operated during the Nineties of last century. Photo: CVCE.

and common interlibrary loan services with books reserved on line, shipped with efficient postal services and reaching users in very little time from east to west and west to east. A few years later, the four networks were merged into a single network: OCLC, at that time Ohio Computer Library Catalogue.⁴

These developments were made possible by the success of standardised rules for cataloguing, with the US national standard MARC 21 eventually becoming the international standard in 1999. Library automation was also going at quick pace with the release of integrated library systems where all library functions were automated.

- 1 **Peter J. Loar** (2012). 'The IFLA–UNESCO partnership 1947–2012'. *IFLA journal*. [↗repository.up.ac.za](https://repository.up.ac.za)
- 2 The series included annual reports organized geographically and thematically from 1991 to 2000.
- 3 **Giuseppe Vitiello** (2014). *International Librarianship in Europe (1990–2000)*. Paper presented at WLIC 2014. [↗library.ifla.org](https://library.ifla.org)
- 4 **Charles R. Hildreth**. *Library Automation in North America: A Reassessment of the Impact of New Technologies on Networking*. K.G. Saur, 1987.
- 5 **Brian and Margot Blunden** (eds.). *The electronic publishing business and its market*. IEPR- Pira International, 1994.
- 6 **Guédon, Jean-Claude**. *In Oldenburg's Long Shadow: Librarians, Research Scientists, Publishers, and the Control of Scientific Publishing*. Washington: Association of Research Libraries, 2001. [↗PDF](#)
- 7 **Association of Research Libraries** 2004–05. A compilation of statistics from the one hundred and twenty-three members of the association of research libraries, compiled and edited by Martha Kyriillidou and Mark Young, Washington, D.C. 2006.
- 8 **Giuseppe Vitiello**. *La comunicazione scientifica e il suo mercato*. Biblioteche oggi, giugno 2003, pp. 37-57.
- 9 [↗PDF Relix Group Annual report 2019](#)

Library excellence in developing information management standards and in setting metadata was a model for the whole of the book world. The book trade had been late in evolving towards more advanced technologies and in 1990 publishers were still struggling on how to create effective websites. A voluminous book published by PIRA Consulting in 1994 (itself based upon an EC-funded strategic studies on new opportunities for publishers in the information services market) shows that pilot experiences were far from having broad applications - in general, the publishing world was lagging behind.⁵

Thirty years ago, the scholarly communication business was still considered an unpromising publishing venture and libraries were highly involved in setting the book agenda. It is not by chance that, in 1991, Elsevier approached libraries in order to explore how to transform printed publications into digital collections.⁶ This was when scholarly publishing started to evolve towards the creation of oligopolies with mergers and alliances which reshaped the publishing and information industries. Reed, one of the biggest publishers, started acquiring important academic publishing houses at a pace comparable to Napoleon's early victories. After merging with Elsevier in 1993, the Reed-Elsevier group became the most important scholarly publisher. In these times, subscriptions to academic

journals started to increase in price and academic publishers changed their business models, with journals sold not by title, as had been the case until then, but as an aggregation of journal titles to be subscribed through licences. The value of library acquisitions in the U.S. academic libraries increased by 273% from 1986 to 2004, while the Consumer Price Index in the same time increased by only 73%.⁷

In 2002, profit margins before EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization) for big academic publishers such as Reed-Elsevier were as high as 25%.⁸ Some twenty years later, in spite of harsh negotiations and the 2012 'cost of knowledge' boycott, profit margins of the major scholarly publisher are still in the order of 23%.⁹ Public libraries, too, started to decline, in terms of resources and staff, although their most serious blow was to go to take place in 2008, in the aftermath of the financial crisis.

Nowadays, libraries do not seem to be front-runners. They are rather catching up on technological giants and information service providers (ISPs). Thirty years ago, almost nothing of what has become ordinary practices in our current lives was in existence. Amazon, Google and other leading ISPs had not come to the light and social media were not even looming on the horizon. At that time, libraries enjoyed the monopoly of free access

- 10 *Britain has closed almost 800 libraries since 2010, figures show*, **Alison Flood**, Friday 6 Dec 2019, theguardian.com
- 11 de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/38173

- 12 **Ministère de la culture et de la francophonie.** Direction du livre et de la lecture (1994). *Bibliothèques municipales, données 1991*. Paris : Imprimerie nationale, 1994 ; Ministère de la culture (2016). *Bibliothèques municipales et intercommunales - Données d'activité 2016*. culture.gouv.fr

to information; this role is now being challenged by ISPs, who are interested in providing access to open content in order to increase their advertising revenues and monetise activities.

This contribution does not have the ambition to provide a systematic description of libraries in Europe, neither does it wish to explore the many factors that have shaped library scenarios in the last thirty years. The objective is to investigate some of the trends featuring current European library developments and to show that library work is not only about transferring books from storage rooms to people. It is to serve communities, for which appropriate legislation and cooperation between the different layers in national library systems are needed. Where is library policy and planning formulated at national level? What are the entities that finance, manage and coordinate library development within a country? This contribution also intends to pay tribute to those librarians, like Ton van Vlimmeren, who have been able to move forward library agendas during these critical years and to anticipate, negotiate and facilitate new developments, thus offering solutions to old as well as to new library problems.

Libraries: for Books Only?

Library statistics are normally considered essential for library planning and its decision-making process. They are also useful in describing historical trends: library numbers, once they are collected and collated, should provide meaningful evidence of the increase or decline of library resources and activities, thus evaluating the success or the failure of library policy and planning.

The annual survey of the UK's libraries, published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, shows that there were 3583 library branches open in the UK in 2019, almost a fifth less than in 2010, with a decline of a 29.6% in library expenditure. The number of paid librarians also plummeted from 24,000 salaried staff working in libraries in 2009/2010 to 15,300 employees and more than 51,000 volunteers in 2018.¹⁰

In only ten years, from 2008 to 2018, the number of public libraries in Germany decreased by 15%, from 10,201 to 8652.¹¹ This decline cannot be generalised in Europe and does not seem so apparent, for instance, in France, where statistics were only able to detect only 1885 public libraries in 1991, while in 2016 there were some 8100 libraries and some 8400 book access points.¹²

- 13 **Jes Petersen** (1990). The Danish Public System undergoes change. *Scandinavian Public Library Quarterly*, 1990, 2, pp. 2-4.
- 14 **Ulla Kvist and Ann K. Poulsen** (2015). 'The public libraries in Denmark in figures'. *Scandinavian Public Library Quarterly*, 2015, 1-2, slq.nu

- 15 **Statistics Denmark**. Public libraries. dst.dk
- 16 **Frank Huysmans** (2016). E-book lending in the Netherlands in European perspective. Posted by Frank Huysmans on 27 oktober 2016, warekennis.nl

In Denmark, in 1970 there were 275 public libraries;¹³ they had almost doubled in 2013, reaching the number of 473 branches.¹⁴ Counting libraries, however, is not a reliable indicator to assess the state of health of European public reading. Are changes in numbers the only indicator to suggest declining or blooming library scenarios? Decreasing figures, for instance, may also reflect the action of regrouping or merging different library branches; a measure which is not unhealthy in itself. Before the German unification, Eastern Germany had 16,850 library branches for a population of 18,3 million inhabitants, almost the double of the libraries in Western Germany, which served 63,2 million people. From a quantitative viewpoint it is easy to infer that the German Democratic Republic had a well-developed library system; from a qualitative perspective, however, the high density of branches may also show that the DDR library system was little short of effective.

A central and perhaps more reliable indicator may be the analysis of book circulation over a long-time span. After all, a library is a library is a library... and its main business is, or should be, to get people interested in books. Isn't the word 'book' inscribed in library etymology – from 'liber' and 'biblion', respectively Latin and Greek for book? Denmark, together with the other Nordic countries, is well known for its strong book



Public Library Helsingør Denmark.
Photo: Ton van Vliommenen.

culture; it is no mystery that the Danish library system is considered among the best in the world. Despite these two concurrent assets, the decline of book circulation in Denmark has been dramatic. In 2018, 29,422,311 books and other materials were on loan for a population close to 6 million. The proportion shows that 5,07 books and other library products per inhabitant were borrowed in Danish libraries.¹⁵ This figure is 2.5 less than what it used to be in 1994, when an average 13,9 books per inhabitant were given on loan during the year. The same can be said for the Netherlands, where public libraries lent out a number of books equal to 145 million in 1999 to 15,7 million people (9,2 loans per inhabitant). In 2015 this figure was cut by half with a number of lent books equal to 73 million for a population of 16,9 million (4,31 books per inhabitant).¹⁶

These trends can be explained in many ways. On the one hand, they show what it means for libraries to lose the monopoly of

- 17 **Deutsche Bibliotheksstatistik 1993**. Arbeitsbericht 1992-1993, Teil D, Gesamtstatistik. Berlin: Deutsches Bibliotheksinstitut, 1994.
- 18 **Deutscher Bibliotheksverband (2020)**. *Facts and figures 2019-2020*. Deutscher Bibliotheksverband, 2020.
- 19 **Ministère de la culture et de la francophonie**. Direction du livre et de la lecture (1994), cit.
- 20 **Ministère de la culture** (2016), cit.
- 21 **Ministère de la culture** (2018). Voyage au pays des bibliothèques. Lire aujourd'hui, lire demain, par Erik Orsenna and Noël Corbin. ↗ culture.gouv.fr
- 22 **Ray Oldenburg** (1989). *The Great Good Place*. New York: Paragon House.

free access to information when ISPs are their competitors. A great amount of content is now available free of charge on networks and are literally at users' fingertips; why should readers bother to go to a library? On the other hand, and opposite to university libraries, public libraries were late in creating opportunities for e-reading to their users and this may elucidate the reduced number of loans. It is also true that leisure nowadays is articulated into a time quota for reading books on the one hand and reading and writing on social media on the other.

Moreover, the same trends cannot be detected in other European countries, where book circulation has been steady or has even increased over time. In 1993, there were 305 million loans in German public libraries over a population of 81,34 million; therefore, 3,74 books were lent per inhabitant.¹⁷ In 2019 this number has increased to 4,09 loans (340 million loans for a population of 83,02 million).¹⁸ The same can be observed in French public libraries. There were 3,3 loans per inhabitant in 1994;¹⁹ this number increased to 4,1 in 2016 - 279,5 ml loans over 66,6 ml inhabitants.²⁰

Therefore, trends in book circulation – historically, a core business of libraries – do not lead to straightforward conclusions. They are far from providing evidence of a diminished role of European libraries in society. Library action cannot be assessed exclusively in the number

of books transferred from storage rooms to users, or from server to server, because libraries are 'lieux du vivre' (living places), in addition to being 'lieux du livre' (book places).²¹ It is what we are going to see in the next paragraph.

Socially Inclusive Libraries and Libraries as Third Places

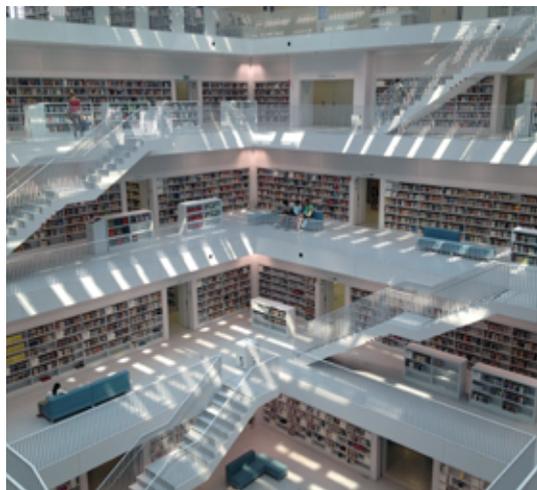
Between home (the 'first place') and the workplace (the 'second place'), members of a community often choose a third place where they feel comfortable, freely exchange their views, make new acquaintances and practice their sense of belonging. Examples of third place environments are churches, cafes, clubs, public libraries, bookstores or parks. In his influential book *The Great Good Place* Ray Oldenburg argues that third places are important for civil society, democracy and civic engagement.²²

This new concept has been implemented in libraries through external symbols and inner features. Externally, libraries flaunt an attractive, exciting design apt to stimulate the curiosity of people who are not

23 **Mathilde Servet** (2009). *Les bibliothèques troisième lieu*. Mémoire d'étude ENSSIB, janvier, [PDF enssib.fr](#)

24 Directorate – General for Internal policies – Policy Department B (2016). *Public Libraries – their new role – Workshop*, by Barbara Lison and Natascha Reip, Frank Huysmans, Dan Mount, IP/B/CULT/IC/2016-023/26/26 July. [PDF europarl.europa.eu](#)

25 **R. David Lankes**. *The Atlas of new Librarianship*. [davidlankes.org](#)



Public Library Stuttgart. Photo: Ton van Vlimmeren.

frequent library users or do not visit libraries at all. Internally, the public space is neutral but is felt as a catalyst for meeting opportunities where individuals feel they are on equal footing with other individuals and can engage in conversations. Libraries as a third place is a tonic concept in an environment which is refreshing and arouses curiosity for the others in mutual respect. First developed in the London East End, the concept known as Idea Store has become an almost universal objective for European public libraries, also being reflected in highly appealing architectures.²³

But library transformation is not only an external sign; it also occurs in library policies. In response to socio-demographic changes and societal transformations, libraries have differentiated their services and linked them to the communities they refer to. This movement has been less the effect of institutional re-positioning than the result of

the major trends and chronic emergencies that have featured in European societies. The socially inclusive library is one where cultural integration becomes an ordinary activity and non-formal and informal learning are an important part of lifelong learning.²⁴ A social library may mean to locate libraries along urban axes where a socially impaired population lives and where library spaces are re-designed and made attractive to marginalized or left-behind groups of people. In this case, library policy and planning is not only about the content of the library, but how and where library spaces are built, how effective and close to people's needs library services are, and how they can be major agents for cultural integration and social inclusion.

The library's transformation from a collection-oriented core business to a socio-cultural center finds its rationale in the 'movements' and 'conversations' libraries engage in with their communities.²⁵ Hence, the link with third sector organizations; cooperative agencies which are also based on voluntary work and are vital for the fulfilment of the library's mission. The re-invention of libraries has followed patterns of development aimed to meet the needs of job seekers, computer illiterates, information poor citizens. And one of the results of this library reorientation has been to tilt away from library traditional role of information providers to take on new responsibilities as

learning centers and workshops. The 3-D makers movement, often hosted in libraries, is a good indication of this trend.

Filling the Gaps between the Centre and Periphery

Library development was strongly linked with the emergence of the concept of nation state in the 19th century when public libraries promoted primary literacy and academic libraries were shaping the political and economic élites of the nation. After the Second World War, public libraries were identified as agents of democratic change: *'The public library is the product of modern democracy and is a practical demonstration of democracy's faith in universal education as a life-long process'*.²⁶ In the early 1970's, this idealistic notion left the floor to a more 'utilitarian' attitude: technological applications, consisting of standards and metadata, earned a prominent role and the literacy missionaries of yesterday became the information managers of today.

The need for being closer to citizens and the territories has emphasised the local dimension of libraries. In all European countries

there has been a movement of responsibilities transferred from central units to a more peripheral level. To avoid dispersion and duplication of library efforts, the need for an agency coordinating initiatives has therefore become mandatory. Digital networking cannot be planned without some form of strategic planning and ways of administering co-funded research & development initiatives. This transfer of power from the centre to the periphery has taken the form of devolution, decentralization or privatization. Devolution or 'autonomy' refers to the movement of responsibility for a government program to a lower level of government so that the lower level of government has complete autonomy in the financing, performance, policy-making and administration of library activities.

Decentralization refers to a situation where the responsibility for performance and administration is to be relegated to a lower level, while policymaking and finance are to be retained at a higher level. Privatisation means that part of the budget allocated to libraries comes from public grants, and that libraries must find other sources of funding to carry out their public mission. These models are implemented in a spurious way in Europe with cooperative arrangements including the administration of library networking under different patterns of development. The digital library needs a centralized form

27 Deutsche Bibliothekskonferenz. *Bibliotheksplan 1973. Entwurf eines umfassenden Bibliotheksnetzes für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland.*
[PDF Bibliotheksplan 1973](#)

28 Ibid.

29 **Ulla Wimmer** (2019). *Die Geschichte vom großen Ö.* Dissertation Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin,
edoc.hu-berlin.de

of administration or the management of a coordinated fund, if only to negotiate contracts with publishers or originate platforms which are common to the whole national library system. So, how has the transfer from higher to lower levels of library governance been implemented? How is the relation between the centre and the periphery managed?

We are now describing two models of distribution of responsibilities for libraries which show possible and, to a certain extent, opposite directions of library policy and planning. They are taken from two countries where the development of libraries has been impetuous in the last thirty years: Germany, where decentralisation is inherent in the federal nature of the German state and where coordination is taken by professional associations, and France, where the movement of decentralisation comes together with significant power of initiative resting at state level.

Universities in Germany are under the responsibility of the 16 Bundesländer. Some of them, like Bayern or Nordrhein-Westfalen, can be compared to mid-sized European states such as Belgium and the Netherlands in terms of size and population; some others, like Bremen and Hamburg, hardly extend over the surface and the population of the capital city. All of them, however, maintain a university and a related academic library. The same can be said for the

public library system. After the sad experience of Volksbüchereien during the national-socialist times, where libraries were learning centres at the service of totalitarian propaganda, a modern concept of public libraries emerged in Germany. The German library system is a strongly autonomous and professional creation. Even the classification of libraries has been a professional undertaking wrapped in a document published in 1973 with the title of *Bibliotheksplan*,²⁷ which pleads for a unification of the library system and has succeeded in breaking down the traditional notional barriers between public and academic libraries.²⁸ Each type and size of library is assigned its individual place in the literature provision network, which is divided into four levels:

- **Level 1:** basic needs to be met by small and middle-sized public libraries;
- **Level 2:** greater need for literature to be met by city libraries, especially by their central library;
- **Level 3:** the need for specialised information and literature to be met cooperatively by some metropolitan libraries, special libraries, regional and university libraries;
- **Level 4:** highly specialised needs to be met only through the cooperation of some special or university libraries having special collections, the three central specialized libraries, and the national libraries in Frankfurt and Leipzig (the so called *Sondersammelgebietsplan* / Fachinformationsdienste supported by DFG).

BIBLIOTHEKSPLAN 1973

Entwurf
eines umfassenden Bibliotheksnetzes
für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland

Berlin 1973
Deutsche Bibliothekskonferenz

The cover page of the Bibliotheksplan 1973, released by the German Library Conference. This plan was going to orient the German Library Policy for almost half century.

The strong link with resources provided by German municipalities renders public libraries in a quite precarious state. It has been said that for German public

30 DFG supported with substantial financing the collection development of 39 decentralized, specialized university libraries.

31 Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. *Stärkung des Systems wissenschaftlicher Bibliotheken in Deutschland Ein Impulspapier des Ausschusses für Wissenschaftliche Bibliotheken und Informationssysteme der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft*, Bonn, 22. Mai 2018, [↗PDF AWBI Impulspapier](#)

libraries, the question is always about 'whether'; whether tomorrow they will continue to exist, or whether the financing entity will eventually decide to get rid of them.²⁹ In post-war Germany two institutions ensured library coordination in Germany: the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, which supported specialised collections in academic libraries from 1949 to 2013 through the Sondersammelgebietsplan,³⁰ and the Deutsches Bibliotheksinstitut focused on public libraries, which was created in 1978 and terminated in 1999. Both entities have been landmarks for library cooperation in a federal library system. After the disappearance of the Deutsches Bibliotheksinstitut, the Deutscher Bibliotheksverband, the Association of German Libraries, has taken over some of its responsibilities, for instance, holding statistics concerning German libraries. The Sondersammelgebietsplan, the common program of collection development, gave way to a 'Distributed Management and Handling of Digital Documents', whose result was exploited in the successful SUBITO project, a decentralised interlibrary loan service.³¹

If Germany, with its strong focus on professional associations, can be considered one of the models of decentralisation of library governance, France offers a different picture and is situated at the other end of the scale. It is well known that French administration has

32 Conseil supérieur des bibliothèques. *Rapport du Président [Michel Melot] pour l'année 1994*. Paris: Association du Conseil supérieur des bibliothèques, 1995.

33 EBLIDA (2020). *Sustainable Development Goals and Libraries – First European report*, May 2020, [↗PDF EBLIDA Report](#)

a strong Napoleonic tradition. Until 1975 the French library system was run at central level by a department of the ministry of Education. A strong movement towards decentralisation took place in the two last decades of the 20th century, also involving libraries. University libraries are now under the responsibility of universities and public libraries are funded and maintained by municipalities.

This transfer of responsibility to a lower level of government is not complete. True, municipalities on the one hand, and universities on the other, have complete autonomy in the financing, performance, policymaking and administration of library activities. Nevertheless, the ministry of Education and the ministry of Culture, respectively, for academic libraries and public libraries, retain a significant role in terms of policymaking and finance, and contribute with substantial funding to library development.

The collaboration between the state and the municipalities has triggered a season of great impulsion provided to the French public library system with new buildings, renewed collections, digital infrastructure, and the rest. Attractive buildings, often designed by famous international architects, have been built up with an offer which extends to multimedia and digital products (in France, libraries are called *mediathèques*).³² Library decentralisation in

France has been so successful that the same pattern of co-funding and cooperation between different layers has been applied also in Portugal in an equally successful way.

Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in European Libraries

In September 2015, the UN General Assembly approved the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 169 targets and 232 indicators. The agenda, adopted by all member states of the United Nations, provides a roadmap for UN countries towards sustainable prosperity, social inclusion and equality, while at the same time preserving our planet and leaving no one behind. In Spring 2020, the European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) released the first European report on 'Sustainable development and Libraries'.³³ This report clearly shows that the UN Agenda 2030 for sustainable development has had incredible success in European libraries. This enthusiasm is partly explained by librarians' self-awareness

34 **Deutscher Bibliotheksverband** (2016). *Deutsche Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie der Bundesregierung - der Beitrag der Bibliotheken zur Umsetzung der Agenda 2030 der Vereinten Nationen. Stellungnahme des Deutschen Bibliotheksverbandes (dbv)*, [↗ PDF Stellungnahme Nachhaltigkeit](#)

that, be it called the 2030 Agenda or not, their tasks are strongly rooted in a sustainable development environment, inherent in all library internal practices and incorporating SDGs at all levels. Sustainable development, however, is more than just library events; it is a policy to be pursued and an overall vision which embraces all aspects of library work. For this reason, some European countries have established entities which are monitoring SDG-oriented library projects and encouraging the transfer of best practices.

In France, four organisations – Enssib (École nationale supérieure des sciences de l'information et des bibliothèques), Cfbid (Comité français international pour les bibliothèques et la documentation), BPI (Bibliothèque Publique d'Information) and ABF (Association des bibliothécaires de France) – have set up a working group in charge of monitoring the follow-up of the UN 2030 Agenda in French libraries. These four organisations play an active role in mobilising libraries around SDGs and have created a joint website where library SDG experiences are listed in a database and new activities are announced. Two of these organisations, Cfbid and ABF, are professional or inter-professional entities; Enssib is the national school of library and information science; BPI is the most important public library in Paris, but its functions also include pooling good practices and experiences in



In 2020, EBLIDA released: 'Sustainable Development Goals and European Libraries: First European Report' and the report 'Think the unthinkable - A post Covid-19 European Library Agenda meeting Sustainable Development Goals and funded through the European Structural and Investment Funds (2021-2027)'.
Photo: Editrice Bibliografica.

all French public libraries with an eye towards international cooperation. This informal body is perfectly in line with the French tradition of collaboration between different layers of library governance.

Since there is no federal institute monitoring libraries in Germany, an important role is played by the German Library Association which created a focus on UN SDGs and drafted in 2016 a position paper where, goal after goal, possible orientations for projects are identified.³⁴ Also in line with a consolidated tradition, German libraries rely on their professional association when library policy and planning on a particular subject – in this case, the Agenda 2030 – is needed.

- 35 **Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation (LAPAS)** (2019). *Voluntary National Review: Connector. Case of Latvian CSOs., LAPAS.*
- 36 **Latvijas Republikas Saeimas** (2020). *Nacionālais attīstības plāns 2021–2027*, [PDF](#)
- 37 **Māra Jēkabsone** (2015). *Latvia public libraries. Active reading promoters. Scandinavian Public Library Quarterly*, Volume 48 NO. 1–2, [slq.nu](#)

- 38 Consejo de Cooperación Bibliotecaria. Grupo de trabajo «Bibliotecas y Agenda 2030» (2019). *Estrategia nacional de información y bibliotecas como agentes para la consecución de los objetivos de la Agenda 2030: Propuesta inicial*, [PDF Bibliotecas y Agenda 2030](#)

Latvian libraries have been mentioned as an example of connectors linked with the civic society in the 2017 Latvian National Voluntary Report.³⁵ The Latvian National Development Plan 2021–2027 – the largest state budget investment plan for the development of Latvia and the improvement of quality of life – also includes libraries as a core concept for the development of culture and education.³⁶ Participation in SDGs is promoted by the Latvian Library Association in collaboration with the National Library of Latvia, which works closely with public libraries and, for several activities, like children’s literature, also has a coordinating role.³⁷ In Latvia, governmental entities and local municipalities are working together to support reading promotion.

Another example comes from Spain, where, in 2017, the Consejo de Cooperación Bibliotecaria (CCB) – including representatives from the regions (Comunidades autónomas), the Ministry of Culture and FESABID, the national library association – set up a working group in charge of elaborating a library policy for Spain in relation to the Agenda 2030. The Consejo is a body supported by the Ministry of Culture, but also includes representatives at local level and the professional association. CCB has been rather active in producing reference documents related to the 2030 Agenda, such as, in 2019, the elaboration of a draft national strategy on libraries as major agents of SDG implementation.³⁸



SDG 2 in action: Agrolib Ja project. ICT training for farmers in library of Glogovac (Serbia). Photo: Jagodina Public Library.

Copyright in Academic and Public Libraries

With some reluctance, librarians have accepted to put copyright at the core of their concerns. Library involvement in copyright issues started some thirty years ago, when a strong and oligopolistic academic publishing industry emerged with its distinctive business model focused on scientific journals distributed in digital form through platforms owned by scholarly publishers. Commercial publishing platforms acquire an even bigger value when they are enriched with indexing services evaluating journals and articles based on the

39 **Giuseppe Vitiello**. Il libro contemporaneo. Editoria, biblioteconomia e comunicazione scientifica. Milano: Bibliografica, 2009, p. 301-302.

40 Directive (EU) 2019/790 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on copyright and related rights in the Digital Single Market [↗eur-lex.europa.eu](#)

41 **Peter Suber**, A History of open access [↗cyber.harvard.edu](#)

number of times they are cited in other articles and journals. The Impact Factor – this is the name of the evaluation tool – is also used to evaluate teachers and professors, as well as universities. Research, which is normally funded with public funds, is being disseminated through highly expensive products and sold to universities; in the first instance, to the same actors who have given away their copyright to publishers for free. In this way, academic publishers manage to generate profit margins that are normally in the order of 23% of their total business turnover – a percentage which is much higher than that realised by any other actor working in the traditional book trade.³⁹

In the last thirty years, therefore, the library strategy for copyright has been largely shaped by academic libraries. This strategy has worked successfully on the recently approved 2019/790 EU Directive on copyright and related rights in the Digital Single Market. This Directive has strongly reinforced the protection of authors and publishers against non-authorized copies distributed by ISPs and ensured that authors, composers, artists, film makers and other creators receive recognition, payment and protection for their works. At the same time, it also provides for exceptions and limitations protecting libraries. Article 3 protects research organisations and cultural heritage institutions that carry out text and data mining of works; article 4 encourages

cross-border teaching activities; article 5 prescribes exceptions for the preservation of cultural heritage; articles 7 and 8 facilitate the use of out-of-commerce works by cultural heritage institutions.⁴⁰

Copyright legislation is the general regulatory framework where transactions between actors interested in copyright-protected works take place. This legislation, however, can be overridden by agreements between libraries and publishers that may be against the interest of libraries. This is often the case in contracts concerning blanket licenses to acquire electronic journals, access to publishers' platforms, or clauses which make it expensive for libraries to shift towards models other than blanket licenses or selected indexing services. In order to contrast the power of commercial academic publishing, the economic strategy pursued by academic libraries and organised groups of researchers has been to build up a scholarly communication chain in open access which is parallel to the commercial one. The chain has been reconstructed from scratch. It starts with authors willing to publish in open access modalities – directly in a repository (the 'green' way) or through the author-paid model (the 'golden' way) – and continues with publishers formatting publications in open access distributed through open access platforms (but also open educational resources, open data, open peer review).⁴¹

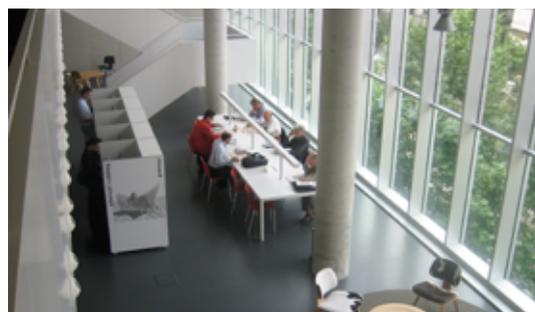
42 Directive 2006/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on rental right and lending right and on certain rights related to copyright in the field of intellectual property, eur-lex.europa.eu

43 I have dealt with this issue in my article 'The economic foundation of library copyright strategies' (forthcoming).

After some twenty years, results have been significant, but feelings are mixed. The open access movement has contained the influence of commercial academic publishers but has not diminished their bargaining power. Moreover, open access is now being integrated into the commercial strategies of academic publishers and it is to be seen whether this shift in publishing business models will entail a reshuffle of power relations between publishers and librarians.

Concerning public libraries, their commercial relations with the book trade are established within the framework of national book policies. Libraries acquire publications, but their most important contribution to the formation of a sound book trade revolves around the mechanism of public lending rights (PLR). Authors and other rights holders receive payment from governments, governmental agencies or libraries in compensation for the free loan of books in libraries. At European level, the directive 2006/115/EC on rental right and lending right has established the general regulatory framework.⁴² In the aftermath of this directive, all European countries have created agencies which manage the collection of PLRs and their re-distribution.

In spite of a common interest, there are differences in the strategies pursued by academic libraries on the one hand, and public libraries on the other. While open access to



Biblioteca Esquerra de l'Eixample in Barcelona.
Photo: Ton van Vliimmeren.

e-publications is a strategy which can be clearly understood by researchers and university professors, whose salaries are paid with public money by research centres and universities, the same strategy cannot apply to authors who make their own living out of the works they create. Therefore, public libraries and academic libraries have to compromise and find strategies that will adapt their copyright needs to the economic realities in which they operate.⁴³ Open access in public libraries the way it is pursued in the academic world may only result in further clashes among actors in the (e-)book chain and the exacerbation of already tense relations. A current failure of library policy and planning in Europe is the lack of authoritative inter-institutional copyright offices at governmental level, where the interests of the state, of local entities and of professional stakeholders are adequately represented and harmonised.

How European Libraries went through the Covid-19 Crisis

When an event hits libraries unexpected and abrupt, as has been the case with the Covid-19 crisis, the 'free spirits' of library cooperation emerge. The many initiatives that have taken place in European libraries have been the acid test of library planning and policy. Library action during the pandemic has been oriented especially towards two aspects: the socially inclusive and the digital library. Many of the initiatives were the result of individual creativity and personal drive; nevertheless, there is evidence that, under extreme constraints, administrations can react promptly and organise new enterprises in a cooperative way for the benefit of communities they serve.⁴⁴

What has happened indeed during the Covid-19 crisis? Throughout Europe, administrative decrees ordered library closure in the hardest times of the crisis and, subsequently, their cautious re-opening to the public in compliance with strict procedures and regulations emanated by national authorities. But were libraries ever locked down? A variety of library activities towards communities were

implemented via phone, text, email and through platforms. Some consisted of supporting elderly people in lockdown; in some cases, libraries delivered food when necessary and supported education for those kids who could not access online teaching from home or those in vulnerable domestic circumstances. Other libraries used social media to offer story time, through Facebook groups and YouTube profiles, or also for library exchange and (re-)use of digital products. Libraries in a few countries even provided face masks for healthcare workers through 3D printers.

The bulk of library activities going through the strict rules regulating services to the public were undertaken at local level in a loose and uncoordinated way. The EBLIDA-Covid report makes reference to Ireland, for instance, where some library branches were involved in a national Covid-19 support service; a 'Community Call' service providing support ranging from a friendly voice to talk to, organising food, transport and medicine and signposting information together with online classes and other wellbeing supports. Mention is also made of local initiatives in Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, where social media were used to offer story time. More advanced services concerned elderly people in lockdown, who were reached by telephone calls and storytelling. In some cases, for instance in Finland, libraries also delivered food when necessary. In the Netherlands, the library

46 [Inb.lt](#) The purchase had been implemented within the framework of the project 'Promoting Smart Use of Refurbished Public Internet Access Infrastructure Among Residents' (VIPT), financed within The EU Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020.

47 **EBLIDA** (2020), p. 15-16.

association negotiated with the association of local councils library guidelines aimed to support education for those kids who cannot access online teaching from home or who are in vulnerable home circumstances.⁴⁵

Normally these activities were undertaken at local level in conjunction with third sector partners, especially when well defined groups of population were targeted. Digital initiatives required instead centralised negotiations with publishers on the rights of using the media in new or different ways. Often the local layer of library governance was active in promoting the socially inclusive library and the central layer was determinant in dealing with enhanced access to digital collections. For instance, the National Library of Lithuania, in cooperation with over 50 public libraries and the involvement of the Robotics School, helped produce 3D printed face masks for healthcare

workers in response to the growing demand for protective equipment. Fifty-eight 3D devices were purchased for the major public libraries of Lithuania in 2019, but no one at that time had any idea that they would be used in the fight against Covid-19.⁴⁶ In this case, cooperation between the state layer of library governance (National Library of Lithuania) and the local layer (public libraries) has been determinant in consolidating library resilience during the crisis. The production of masks through 3D printers was also undertaken in local initiatives in France and Portugal.

During the Covid-19 crisis, library digital collections were made available to the public, and demand for access to e-books and e-journals rocketed in each library, in particular in public libraries. In some countries, like Estonia, the offer increased by 1,000-1,500% in relation to statistics recorded before the outbreak of Covid-19. This boost should be measured not only in quantity, but also in the quality of the variety of digital resources including self-learning, content on demand, music, press, e-books. Some libraries closed to the public, also tried to perform workshops, talk shows and lectures through live streaming.

During the Covid-19 crisis, the National Library of Latvia managed to come to an agreement with AKKA/LAA (Copyright and Communication Consulting Agency/Latvian



National Library of Lithuania producing face shields during the Covid 19 crisis (April 2020).
Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis.

48 NAPLE (2020a), p. 7.

49 *The Library as a Movement*, A conversation between Marie Østergaard and R. David Lankes. davidlankes.org

Authors' Association) through which public electronic access to the periodicals portal was provided at no cost until the end of the state of emergency; an unparalleled example in Europe. This agreement was followed by a paid temporary license concerning the digital collection of more than 10,000 works from the 17th century to the end of the 20th century. Other libraries, like the National Library of Sweden, also managed to come to agreements with publishers in relation to e-newspapers.⁴⁷ A similar experience is reported to have taken place in the Czech Republic, where more than 206,000 titles (over 59 million pages) of digitised monographs and periodicals were made available.⁴⁸ Negotiations with publishers aimed to enhance the provision of digital collections have therefore been centralized and undertaken by organizations normally working at state or inter-regional level.

Library Cooperation: What Future for Organisations Active at European Level?

The European Commission 'Telematics for libraries' program running in the 1990s was terminated in 1998. The interest in libraries from the European institutions did not decline but was re-distributed in a series of other EU initiatives and programs, going from research to cultural industries and from democracy and civic engagement to informal learning and vocational training. The convergence of cultural industries brought about by the digital revolution re-designed the book field and made traditional professions such as publishers or librarians less distinctive; hence, the lack of EU interest for programmes designed for them. Marie Østergaard rightly speaks of libraries as movements of community's members, librarians, politicians, partners and more. People may flow in libraries to perform pre-determined tasks, such as reading, but also to find the good, great 'third place' and to meet other people, as in a public plaza.⁴⁹

In the 1990's, the European Commission programme had been instrumental in creating or reinforcing a network of national focal points in all EU countries. It had also encouraged, directly or indirectly, the formation of various ad hoc organisations and consortia on the European level. At that time, CENL (Conference of European National Libraries) and CERL (Consortium of European Research Libraries) came into existence; various organisations, such as LIBER (the European Association

50 LIBER libereurope.eu was founded in 1971 under the auspices of the Council of Europe; EBLIDA eblida.org is born in 1992 originally with a focus on public lending rights; NAPLE Sister Libraries naplesisterlibraries.org was founded in 2002 and PL 2030 started in 2014 with an initial grant of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation publiclibraries2030.eu.

of Research Libraries) and EBLIDA (the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations) also benefited from the resources allocated by the EU program. Officially, 'Telematics for libraries' ceased with the end of the 4th Framework Programme in 1998, although several projects were terminated a couple of years later.

Together with the 'Telematics for libraries' programme, a number of institutions that were designed to be the national focal points for this program also ceased to exist. We have seen the case of the Deutsches Bibliotheksinstitut in Germany; the Statensbibliotekstjeneste in Denmark and the Conseil supérieur des bibliothèques in France were suppressed a few years before or later; other entities, such as the Osservatorio programmi internazionali per le biblioteche in Italy, were incorporated into other institutions. The re-orientation of the EU program for libraries, the dismantlement of national focal points as well as the dispersion of library initiatives into multiple European programs made it necessary to build up or to reinforce a dense and dynamic number of professional organisations active at European level.

There is a fundamental difference between library associations operating at European and at U.S. levels. In the U.S., some twenty professional associations work in the

library field in addition to the American Library Association (ALA). These associations are specialised by category, like the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), or by subject as law, music, medicine, e.g., Medical Library Association Network of Health Information Professionals (MLA). In the U.S., library associations operate with and for their members; when they are looking for additional funding and sponsorships, they normally relate to charitable foundations.

In Europe, the picture is rather different. Organisations working at European level may have institutional members belonging to a library category, like LIBER, the oldest of these organisations, whose scope is eminently academic. Some of them have a mixed composition, like EBLIDA, whose founders are library associations, but associate members are often institutions as university- and national libraries. Some other organisations, like NAPLE (National Authorities for Public Libraries in Europe) have an institutional membership which includes local government agencies responsible for libraries and others, like Public Libraries 2030 do not have members at all but bring together well-advanced 'lighthouse' libraries.⁵⁰ CENL and CERL, are, technically, EC-originated spinoffs and have members defined by their library category. Other organisations, like SPARC Europe, have a membership comprising academic institutions, library

consortia, research institutes and publishers committed to deliver open access and open science.

Because of differences in mission, scope and membership of all the organizations, each organisation interacts with different EU programmes. LIBER is highly involved in the Horizon programme. EBLIDA addresses the 2030 European Agenda on sustainable development with a focus on European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027, in addition to the more traditional focus on library legislation and policy (public lending rights and copyright). Public Libraries 2030 is working on the EU 'Promoting democracy' program and Erasmus+.

All these organisations make attempts to stimulate library advances through EU opportunities and to get additional financial support for their members, while trying to diversify their own sources of income. All of them practice advocacy with European institutions for the projects and the activities they carry out.

These organisations have successfully taken over the network of suppressed library focal points at national level. They interact within a Europe which is diverse, multilingual, multicultural and deal with the features which Europe – with all the differences between north and south and east and west – is proud of: its welfare system, the cultural exception and the

distinctive way sustainable development is interpreted and implemented.

The effervescence of this dense network of organisations active within European libraries should not be diminished or impoverished. There is a case for networking, for cooperation rather than competition, with an emphasis on values pertinent to the library profession which make it distinct from other European networks. At European level organizations like EBLIDA and LIBER act as a forum for libraries where experiences and best practices in different contexts and under so many frameworks can be exchanged. Resources could however be shared more, and a common infrastructure created which would help them make economies of scale and fully benefit from library cooperation. Europe is a complex continent, and no unifying strategy can replace this complexity. Library organisations working at European level are making the best out of it through initiatives and networking, for the sake of library policy and planning in Europe.

About the author

Maija Berndtson was born in 1947 in Helsinki, Finland. She was Deputy Chief Librarian of Espoo City Library (1978-1984), Secretary General of the Finnish Library Association (1984-1987) and Library Director of Helsinki City Library (1987-2013).

Maija was participant of IFLA World Library and Information Congress in 14 congresses, and IFLA Chairperson of the Section of Library Buildings and Equipment (1996-1998).

She was member of PubliCA, Public Libraries Concerted Action (EU) (1997-1999) and of The International Network of Public Libraries by Bertelsmann Foundation (1998-2001).

She wrote articles in international library journals and books especially about management, development of public libraries and library architecture.



Trends in European Public Library Buildings

by Maija Berndtson (Finland)

What is a trend? The Merriam-Webster dictionary answers: a) a prevailing tendency or inclination, b) a general movement, c) a current style or preference.¹ There are many other definitions of the concept of trends too, but I think these three are enough when I am writing about trends in library buildings. I will say something about current tendencies, styles and preferences which are seen today in libraries and look to the future. And who am I, the writer of this article? I have been working in libraries since the middle of 1960's in various jobs, latest as library director in Helsinki City Library.² In that role I have been involved in planning and writing the program for the architectural competition of the new central library in Helsinki, now called Oodi/Ode.³ I am also a co-founder of the project Library Ranking Europe, which evaluates and ranks European public libraries from a customer perspective.⁴ This article is my personal view which reflects my career as a librarian and a library director in almost 50 years.

Nordic Public Library Ideology

My opinions are not only based on my working experience but also on the Nordic public library tradition and ideology in which public libraries are held to be important for freedom of expression and democracy, culture, education,

research and social development and are free of charge. I limit my observations to European public libraries as I do not know the situation well enough in other continents. I hope that this article will contribute to the discussion among the profession: are these identified trends relevant to public library buildings in Europe? And do we see the same trends in other continents? Sometimes it is easier to understand the present when we look back at the history. Library premises from the 18th century had very visible trends. Those libraries were not public libraries but were owned by nobility or run by institutions like universities and monasteries and offered service for a very limited clientele. Some typical trends in these libraries were the bookshelves on walls from the floor to the ceiling, an open area in the middle of the room with globes or vitrines. There were few seats except in separate reading rooms and most seats were connected to a desk. The interior was richly decorated with many details. The atmosphere was sublime. Today several of these libraries are mentioned beside some of the newest big libraries when the most beautiful libraries in the world or in Europe are listed. But inter alia many of these old libraries – as beautiful as they are – are more historical monuments; museums of the history of libraries.⁵

Perhaps the most typical historical public library trends are connected to the Carnegie libraries built with money sponsored

- 1 [merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trend](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trend)
- 2 libraryranking.com/about/majja-berndtson
- 3 oodihelsinki.fi
- 4 libraryranking.com

- 5 For example: Most beautiful libraries book elledecor.com, 10 Most beautiful libraries from Italy to Austria theculturetrip.com, Beautiful libraries Europe thetravel.com
- 6 **Carnegie libraries** en.wikipedia.org

by the Scottish American businessman and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. A total of 2,509 Carnegie libraries were built between 1883 and 1929 and they were mainly located in the Anglo-American world.⁶ The exteriors varied but the interiors followed the same pattern: there were a lecture room, reading rooms for adults and children, a staff room, a centrally located librarian's desk, high ceilings and large windows. Some of the architectural details had a symbolic meaning. For example, the entrance via a staircase from the ground level symbolized the steps of a person's elevation by learning. Or the lampposts installed near the entrance represented the enlightenment. The most significant and far-reaching trend which started with these libraries was however the transfer from the closed stack policy to the open bookshelves, something new for public libraries. I briefly present these two library concepts to highlight that the long history of libraries is affecting the image and idea of our institutions even today. And not only among the profession but also among citizens, politicians, patrons, and library users. The image in a nutshell is as follows: libraries are very much about books. Books are valuable and they should be treated with respect. That is why they must be controlled by librarians. Libraries are noble places where silence is demanded. Much of this is not valid when we are talking about today's trends in library buildings.

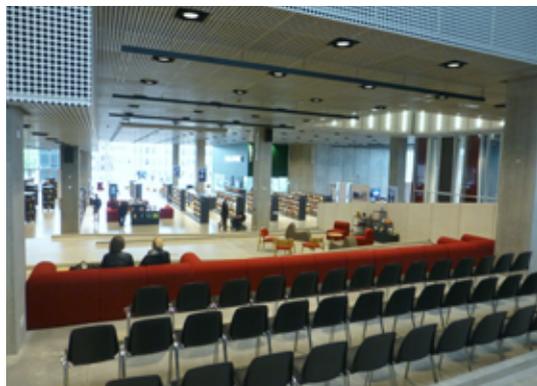
As long as libraries were dealing with physical objects, even if they had a new form like cassettes, CDs, videos and DVDs, there was no need to make bigger changes in the traditional way of working. The new materials were essentially comparable with books. Today some of these 'new' materials have already disappeared from the physical collections. The challenge and need of the new paradigm occurred in the late 20th century when the internet was launched, and the world turned to be more and more digital. During this epoch, and going forward, it is questioned whether we need physical libraries at all when everything can be found on the internet. The other radical vision was that library premises would be large computer halls without any books at all.

The reality turned out to be totally different. On the contrary the need of a physical library seemed for many of us to be more and more important. This trend is very much connected to some big new library buildings in major cities. The starting point was Seattle where a new library was opened in 2004. It was followed by Amsterdam in 2007, Birmingham in 2013, Aarhus in 2015, Helsinki in 2018 and Oslo in 2020. There are some more examples, but with these libraries I have a kind of personal contact.

All these libraries and buildings have their own vision including fresh and innovative aspects. With these examples of libraries,

- 7 **Seattle Central Library** [archdaily.com](#)
 8 **Public Library Amsterdam** / Jo Coenen & Co
 Architekten [archdaily.com](#)

- 9 **Library of Birmingham** / Mecanoo [archdaily.com](#)
 10 **Dokk1, Aarhus** [welibrarybuildings.info](#)



Ramp, Dokk1 Aarhus.

I can identify the paradigm shift which has been in progress concerning the services of public libraries and which has influenced library buildings, premises, and aesthetics. A distinguishing aspect of the Seattle library building – designed by the famous Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas – is that it is a real landmark building. It has received worldwide attention even outside the library world. It proved that even library buildings can be as remarkable as other great cultural institutions like museums and concert halls. I quote the architects Rem Koolhaas and Joshua Prince Ramus: 'The Seattle Central Library redefines the library as an institution no longer exclusively dedicated to the book, but as an information store where all potent forms of media – new and old – are presented equally and legibly.'⁷ In Amsterdam, Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam, OBA, was an important part in the city planning of an earlier industrial area where some new cultural institutions and offices were to be created. Here both the library and the restaurant on the top floor of the building became extremely popular. The high number of visitors strengthened the same phenomenon

as in Seattle: the popularity proved that there is a need for modern library buildings.⁸ In Birmingham the new library replaced the old central library building from 1974. The old one was a concrete building in the brutalist style, the new one a transparent glass building with delicate filigree skin. The interesting aspect with the new library was that it was from the beginning called People's Palace, a center for learning, information, and culture, that unites people of all ages and backgrounds.⁹

Robotic Car Park in the Basement

Aarhus library, Dokk1, was like Amsterdam a part of a larger city development project called Urban Mediaspace Aarhus. The Danish colleagues had a long and very profound planning process of their new library. They had seven core values among them 'Citizen as key factor' and 'Bridging citizens, technology and knowledge'. The architectural idea was that the building is 'an attractive, intelligent and interactive building, which supports the desire to learn and experience'. Below the library, underground, there is Europe's largest robotic car park for 1000 cars.¹⁰

Helsinki Central Library Oodi/Ode clearly shows in its architecture and interior design some of the new trends. Each of

- 11 **Oodi Helsinki Central Library**, Ala architects
archdaily.com
- 12 **Deichman Library Atelier Oslo**, Lund Hagem
archdaily.com

- 13 **LocHal Library** / CIVIC architects + Braaksma & Roos
architectenbureau + Inside Outside + Mecanoo
archdaily.com
- 14 **Utrecht Central Library & Post Office** / Zecc
Architecten + Rijnbouwt archdaily.com



Birmingham Library.

the three floors has its own special image. The design divides the functions of the library. An active ground floor extends the town square into an interior space containing restaurant, cinema, exhibition areas and auditorium. The 'Book heaven', a space for books and media in an unconventional form on the upper level, is a more traditional part of the building. The enclosed in-between volume of the building contains rooms to accommodate different activities like studying, gaming, playing, sewing, using 3D printers etc. The drastic partition between different services and the fact that books only fill one third of the space, has even raised the question: is this building really a library?²¹

The opening of Deichmanske bibliotek in Oslo is a great continuation of the series of big new libraries in Europe. Even here, areas for people are central. The architects express it like this: 'An open public space dominates the interior, with a variety of furniture and activities. Enclosed spaces and niches are organized around three free standing book towers.'¹² But there are not only new library buildings which have been opened during the latest

years. Another trend is to renovate old buildings to function as libraries. This is perhaps most typical in the Netherlands where there are several great examples of this type of library premises. One of them is LocHal Library in the former shed of the Dutch National Railway in Tilburg. The architects' description: 'While keeping traditional 'book consumer' facilities, the new library also provides ample opportunity for the creation of new knowledge. The growing importance of 'Curatorship' is facilitated by the architecture.'¹³ And then of course in 2020 Utrecht Central Library opened in the former Post Office. The architect describes it thus: 'The national monument is best known for its reception hall. The entrance was the only place that was accessible to the public. But around the hall was another 8,000 square meters of business space. That is a fascinating idea. Somuch hidden space right in the middle of the city. Our brief was to create a connection with the city. Reveal and open up the building to its surroundings.'¹⁴

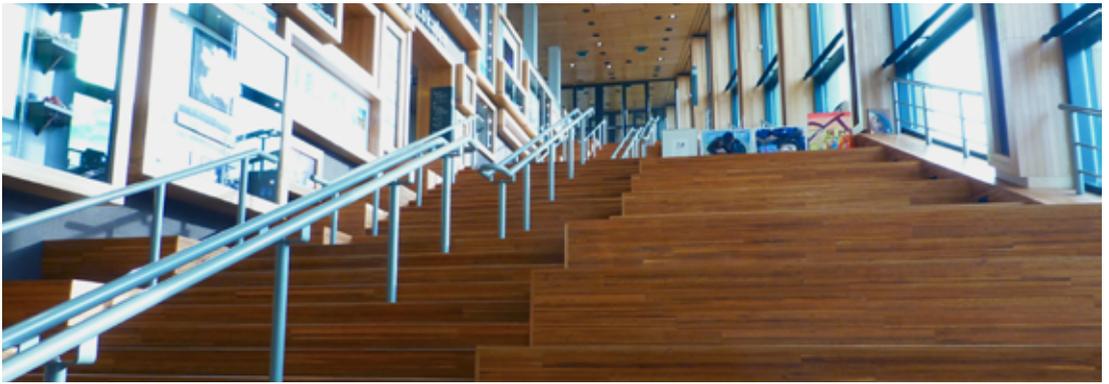
I have intentionally let the architects formulate their ideas and have mainly used the same source, Arch Daily, which is a weblog covering architectural news. My own opinion is that these big – and great – libraries in major cities have influenced the whole library field in many ways. They have shown definitively that libraries play a central part in developing city centers besides other cultural institutions.

As open non-commercial public spaces, these libraries attract many people and are the most visited institutions. They also prove the rich variety of the services which libraries offer today and how they can work with different partners. That is, these remarkable libraries have changed the image and status of public libraries in a way which promotes and supports also smaller libraries in their endeavor to develop. This is the 'big picture' of library trends. But which are the trends on a more practical level for example in the design of premises and interiors? In professional library literature we find numbers of articles about the interaction with users and about the development of more user-oriented libraries. Statements about moving focus from collection to connection are many, from product to user-orientation likewise. To the same category belongs the idea that libraries are moving from book containers to community centers, living rooms of the society.

Danish colleagues have been active in describing this needs to change in books, articles, and different projects. Sometimes this happens in cooperation with other Nordic countries like in the book 'Nordic Public Libraries 2.0'. In the introduction article 'Agenda for the New Library', Jens Thorhauge lists three changes to be noticed. I quote him freely: (1) the collection is still the clue but the creation of it must be based on users' needs, (2) 'the new library' has to create new services, combining

the virtual/digital with the physical and in more interactive relation to the users, (3) the library should be there where people are both on the web and physically in city centers, shopping malls and similar places.¹⁵

The most important guiding principle in all these three points are people. The focus has moved from the collection to the users. For me this change of emphasis became clear and concrete when I heard about new planning guidelines: 70 per cent of the space for the users, 30 per cent for the collection while before you put it in the opposite way. This guideline with user requirements has been as revolutionary the move from the closed book stacks to open bookshelves once was. This trend is clearly visible in new and refurbished libraries. Everywhere you get the feeling that the users' areas are dominating. The goal that libraries should be an important part of public urban spaces, living rooms of the societies, has the effect that the design of premises and furnishing have totally changed. The big quiet reading rooms have disappeared and instead there are many kinds of reading areas with a variety of furnishing. The idea that the whole library design should follow one style is gone. The variety is the trend and a new kind of flexibility which offers the users the possibility to move furniture and create a surrounding which is suitable for their needs.



Staircase, Rozet Arnhem.

The vision that computers would dominate library interiors is gone, too. There are some customer computers but more important is the access for users' own computers. Talking about the technology there is a need and a demand that libraries offer more exclusive devices for their users; devices which we rarely use or which are so expensive that it is impossible for private persons to buy them. This is one of the guidelines in the creation of maker spaces and labs. Those devices can be whatever from the 3D printers to sewing machines, and everything in between. The trend is that the user has got an active role in the library and it must be obvious in the premises. It means that there must be working group rooms, studios for music and visual arts, game rooms, multipurpose halls and even kitchens. The broad collaboration with different partners like citizens' offices, theaters, cinemas, exhibitions, cafes, restaurants and so on can sometimes be so strong that it raises the question – like in Helsinki – is this a library at all?

No Deterrent Libraries

Compared with the past the library has become more easygoing and by that it has perhaps lost some of its dignity, it looks more like a 'folkbibliotek'; a people's library. Gone are the stairs which lead to a higher educational

level, and the entrances are inviting and easy to access. The overwhelming atmosphere and style show a variety and richness of everything. It is the richness of materials in different forms, it is the richness in the variety of what can be done in the library, it is the richness among the users who are not any more regarded as belonging to different groups, adults, children and youth for example. And it is also richness in design and style and in the demand of aesthetics.

One of the most challenging aspects is now how to reserve space for all wishes and needs. How to combine the need of silence and the need to be social? How to balance the collaboration with partners so users still feel that this is a library? The users have taken over the library space: the library premises can be used outside the official opening hours, or there is no staff during a part of the opening hours. In these cases, there is some control but compared to earlier times, the classic control has diminished, or it has changed in form. These new libraries are generous and liberal.

One vivid and dominant trend is the style and design of the indoor stairs. They are as much intended for sitting, as a platform, or as a ramp. Not only for going up and down. Those stairs are a phenomenon, a special feature which can be seen in various forms in many of the new library buildings. Where and how this phenomenon started and why is for

me unknown. The oldest inspiration is perhaps the antique amphitheater. Or have those stairs replaced the old symbolic stairs in the Carnegie libraries, symbolizing the way up to development and wisdom? If in the future you must determine which period a library building represents and if there are indoor stairs for sitting, you can easily place that library to the beginning of the 21st century.

I have written about trends as if they were dominant in European public libraries. But this is not the situation. Library Ranking Europe, the project in which I am co-founder, visits, observes and ranks European public libraries from a customer point of view. In that role I have visited libraries in 19 European countries. And in many places the trends I have described here are not visible. There can be very modern, rather new libraries, but at the same time very traditional. Their premises are characterized by books all over and with bookshelves from floor to ceiling. And the control when you enter the library as customer can be almost scary. And still more: in some libraries you hardly find any seats.¹⁶

This means that the trends which I have presented, for me, also can be regarded as goals. But they are not widely implemented practices. I strongly believe, however, that these trends represent the direction in which libraries ought to orientate as to survive and flourish. And most important of all is that

libraries can offer citizens services according to demand of today. But the long history of libraries and their image in many people's mind is sometime an obstacle in the process of change. An example from Finland proves how slow the change can be before it is launched in all libraries. The move from closed stacks to open shelves took there 40 years.

At the same time when we expect that more libraries would follow and take over models of the existing trends we ought to look forward and raise the question: what are the coming trends and the next steps? It has been interesting to read about the plans of the Dutch colleagues Rob Bruijnzeels and Joyce Sternheim to publish a book about the future architecture of public libraries. They have the opinion that a relevant book is missing. A book which deals with the need for changes in public libraries, and the new needs libraries are facing. They are critical of current trends and think that the archetype of a library has been translated into ultramodern design.

Bruijnzeels and Sternheim consider that when libraries started highlighting being public open spaces, agoras, third places, social condensers and living rooms of the society they lost their identity as libraries. They want to turn the tide and restore the role of the collection as a source of inspiration, work material and living archive. Their question is whether 'it is



Oodi Helsinki. Photo: Kuvio.

possible to design a building that is immediately recognizable as a library and at the same time gives shape to the new role of the library in society?' They try to find an answer to this question in the book 'Imagination and Friction' that aims to bridge the gap between library innovation and innovative architecture.¹⁷

The other interesting new aspect is 'serendipity' in planning of the physical libraries. The Cambridge Dictionary defines serendipity as the fact of finding interesting or valuable things by chance and some researchers argue that serendipity is underestimated in several fields including science, technology, and art. The Estonian architect student Mari-Lill Kaul, whose co-supervisor I have been, has included this concept in her unpublished master's thesis '(A Place For) Integration, Exploration and Serendipity: The New Tartu Library'. She refers to two researchers, Bente Halvorsen and Lennart Björneborn (see references), who have studied this topic.

I am fascinated by Kaul's text in which she refers to Björneborn (2008): 'Björneborn's exploratory study "Serendipity dimensions and users' information behavior in the physical library interface" showed that about 50% of the interviewees were goal-directed only and the other 50% were open to unplanned discoveries, which indicates the need to further investigate, develop and apply the idea of unplanned and

unexpected encounters. That should also not only be limited to encounters with books but with other sources of information, and people.' In a world in which computers create profiles based on how we behave and consume, it is increasingly important that we also get impulses and ideas outside of 'our own box'. In this aspect libraries could work against the main trends and offer something different: the possibility of serendipity, something important which happens by chance. In Kaul's text, I also see connections to Bruijnzeel's and Sternheim's thoughts which makes me think: can this be a part of a new trend?

In my opinion libraries have not been very successful in combining the virtual/digital instruments with the physical in interactive relation to the users. Jens Thorhauge's second point. Libraries should look at advanced museums to learn what and how to do. One example is in Ode library in Helsinki: the immersive room where a group of people can share the same virtual experience. This room, called Kuutio/Cube has been used among other things to present immersive media artworks which offer experiences that viewers can dive into.¹⁸

- 17 [↗ PDF Imagination and Friction \(E\)](#)
18 **The doors to immersive art will open at Oodi**
[↗ oodihelsinki.fi](#)
19 [↗ goethe.de](#)

Kafka in the Virtual World

My own strongest and most unforgettable memory in connecting the virtual world with a literary text is Goethe Institute's project VRWandlung which transfers Franz Kafka's story 'The Metamorphosis' from the pages of the book to virtual reality. You can share the feelings of the travelling salesman Gregor Samsa who wakes up one morning in the body of a beetle in a room faithfully reproduced after the original. To be able to see this all, I am equipped with headphones, hand and foot motion controllers and, of course, virtual reality glasses. After this experience – which I found by accident in a library and which thus represents serendipity – I ask: could these kinds of projects be used more to raise the interest to literature?¹⁹

Will these three examples – the restoration of the role of the collection in connection with design, the serendipity in the physical library interface, and the virtual world connected with texts – represent some of the new or next trends in library buildings? New trends are growing all the time, but we should not forget the probability of surprises either, the black swans, like the actual Covid-19. A propos coronavirus: which effects will this pandemic have on libraries in the long run? We have to be ready to react to the

needs of the citizens but our best protection in a turbulent world is the public library's tradition and ideology in which public libraries are identified as important for freedom of expression and democracy, culture, education, research and social development.

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About the author

Sue Sutherland has provided consultancy services to local and central government for the past nine years. Prior to that she had six years as Deputy Chief Executive and Director of the National Digital Library with the National Library of New Zealand and ten years as Libraries and Information Manager for the Christchurch City Council. She was an inaugural member of the International Network of Public Libraries, funded by the Bertelsmann Stiftung from 1996-2003. She is a Fellow of LIANZA and was made an Honorary Life Member in 2010 on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of LIANZA. Sue currently sits on the Board of the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.



Public libraries in Aotearoa New Zealand

by Sue Sutherland
(New Zealand)

I was delighted to be asked to contribute to the anthology about public libraries to mark the occasion of the retirement of Ton van Vlimmeren. The idea to pull together the knowledge in Ton's network is a great one. I am grateful to my colleagues and friends, Allison Dobbie, Jane Hill and Carolyn Robertson who have led, or in Carolyn's case still leads, the three largest libraries in New Zealand – Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch – for their insights and ideas. However, this account of the state of public libraries in New Zealand is my personal view, and any opinions shared are mine – others may have a different perspective.

Background

New Zealand's first public library opened in Wellington in 1841. The Port Nicholson Exchange and Public Library was established by a group of the city's first settlers but it closed after a year because of competitors and defaulting subscribers. From this inauspicious start New Zealand public libraries have burgeoned and blossomed in the intervening 180 years. Today there are around 386 libraries provided by 67 local authorities which range in size from Auckland City with a population of over 1.65 million to Kaikoura District with 3912 people. Auckland City was formed by the amalgamation of seven city and district councils in

November 2010 and is the largest local authority in Australasia and the Pacific. Prior to amalgamation five of the library services worked together and developed a shared library management system which simplified the coming together for libraries in the new super city and meant that the combined library service was up and running very quickly. It was recognised as one of the major successes of the new city. Auckland City is four times larger in population than the next largest city which is Christchurch in the South Island. The majority of New Zealanders live in the six largest cities: Auckland, Christchurch, Hamilton, Wellington, Tauranga and Dunedin. Much of the South Island is sparsely populated and this makes for difficulties in providing library services across large geographic areas with isolated settlements. In spite of this, however, New Zealand is relatively well served by its libraries and the opportunities made possible by online services has helped in getting reading materials and information to more remote areas. Mobile libraries continue to supplement physical libraries in parts of the country as well.



Devonport Library.

Buildings

Even as we move more and more into living our lives online, new library buildings are still being built. The last twenty five years has seen numerous new builds and significant refurbishments of existing buildings. The role that libraries play in urban design as part of place making has been recognised by architects, planners and elected officials looking to regenerate communities. Libraries are now seen as part of important social infrastructure and generally are quality, architecturally designed buildings. It is hard to pick out the best of the best but libraries which had significant community impact and broke new ground included the New Brighton Library (1998) and the South Library (2003) both part of the [Christchurch City Libraries](#). These libraries introduced gaming machines for young

people, TV, Wi-Fi, tablet PCs and other digital technologies well ahead of their time, while the South Library was one of the first to have a café as an integral part of its service offering.

Puke Ariki (2003) was one of the first integrated library, museum and I-Site information centre with stunning architecture on the shore front in New Plymouth and [Te Takere](#) in Levin (2012) was one of the first to bring together library services with services and facilities for community, business, youth, and tourism. An innovative design transformed a former big box-type supermarket building to a dynamic-looking and inviting community centre.

More recently we have seen new community libraries in Auckland such as [Devonport](#) (2015) and [Waiheke Island](#) (2014) where the architecture and design reflects and complements the unique features of both these communities and in the most recent community library in Wellington with [Waitohi Hub](#) (2020) which houses the Johnsonville Library.

The most impressive of the new library buildings, however, is [Turanga](#) (2018), the central library for Christchurch City. Following the major earthquakes of 2010 and 2011, the existing central library was demolished and the library service operated out of two different temporary sites for the 7-8 years it took to plan and construct the new library. It is a



Turanga, central library of Christchurch City.

stunning 5 level building with a soaring atrium stair that lets in light and provides interesting views between the levels of the building. Ngāi Tūāhuriri's [Matapopore Trust](#) was a key partner in the development of the new central library and cultural values, aspirations and narratives are woven throughout Tūranga's entire experience. Art is fully integrated into the fabric of the building. The library has everything you would expect from a 21st century service. A range of meeting and study spaces, a music production studio, computer lab, maker area, a conference room with kitchen facilities, local history and archival area, children's and young people's spaces, cafés and of course great collections. Two balconies on the top level – one facing north and the other south bring the flora of the region into the library. The Discovery Wall is described below.

Collections and Services

The range of services provided by libraries has changed significantly over the last two to three decades. All public libraries provide a range of physical and e-resources for loan. Almost all provide a range of subscription databases with Ancestry.com and newspaper databases being the most popular. There are several eBook consortia, whereby libraries pool their resources to purchase items so that a wider range is available to users. The majority of libraries still loan DVDs for a small fee but compact discs (CDs) have virtually disappeared from most library shelves. Physical audio books are still popular but are rapidly being replaced by eAudio.

The take up of eBooks has been slowly growing. Auckland Libraries recently issued their [10 millionth eBook](#) and have been successful in growing their eLending through targeted marketing campaigns and ensuring that the selection of available materials is comprehensive.



Children's department Auckland Public library.



Upper Riccarton Library.

Programmes and events

Programming varies from library to library but most offer a range of programmes that support reading development from babies to older children such as the [E.C.Read'n](#) suite of programmes, babytimes and wriggle and rhyme. The larger libraries offer a significant array of programmes for all ages, often run in collaboration with other organisations and groups. A look at the websites of [Auckland](#) or [Christchurch](#) libraries gives an idea of the extent and variety of events on offer.

Self-service

Self-service using RFID is a common model with many libraries moving away from larger counters to a more side-by-side model of service with roaming library staff out on the library floor. However, since the terrorism act in Christchurch there has been a stronger focus on staff security and Covid-19 has also resulted in libraries introducing perspex barriers between the customer and the staff member to stop the spread of the virus. It is too soon to say whether this will see a reversal of the more informal staff/customer interaction that libraries have been moving to.

Council customer service

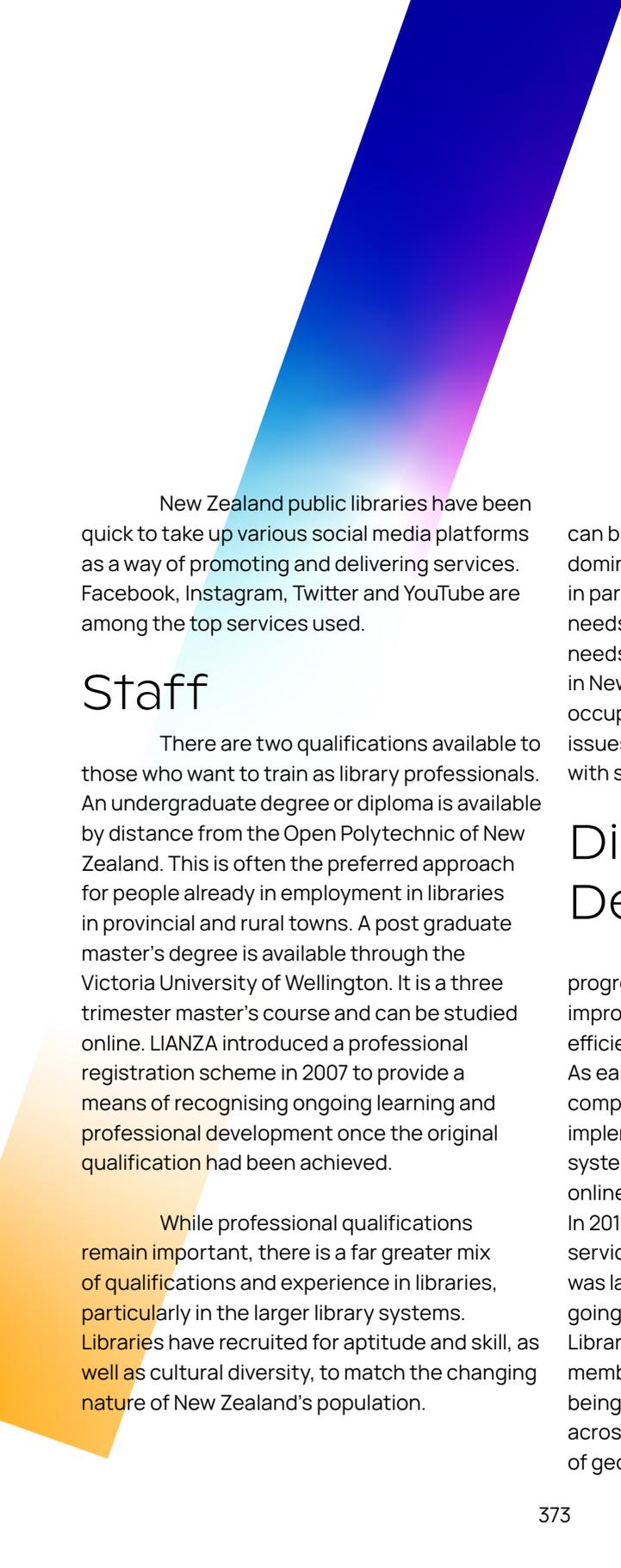
A number of local authorities (also known as councils) have moved to a combined library and council customer service model whereby staff will take payments and provide

information for council services such as dog registration and payment of rates. While this provides a 'one stop shop' for residents, particularly in geographically spread areas, there can be issues in having sufficient resources for the competing needs of customers during peak times.

Targeted service development

As New Zealand has become more multicultural through significant immigration (net migration for July 2019 was 56,000 for a population of 4.9 million) libraries have provided a range of services to help newcomers integrate within communities. Resources and programmes such as English as a second language (ESOL), providing collections in other languages, hosting migrant meetings and providing opportunities for English language conversations are just some of the initiatives.

Public libraries have had strong housebound services but more recent initiatives to include marginalised groups include those on the autism spectrum, those with early dementia, or the homeless. Auckland Libraries held a [hui with 30 homeless people](#) and as a result developed a suite of services to support these users in accessing reading, learning and leisure opportunities.



New Zealand public libraries have been quick to take up various social media platforms as a way of promoting and delivering services. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube are among the top services used.

Staff

There are two qualifications available to those who want to train as library professionals. An undergraduate degree or diploma is available by distance from the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. This is often the preferred approach for people already in employment in libraries in provincial and rural towns. A post graduate master's degree is available through the Victoria University of Wellington. It is a three trimester master's course and can be studied online. LIANZA introduced a professional registration scheme in 2007 to provide a means of recognising ongoing learning and professional development once the original qualification had been achieved.

While professional qualifications remain important, there is a far greater mix of qualifications and experience in libraries, particularly in the larger library systems. Libraries have recruited for aptitude and skill, as well as cultural diversity, to match the changing nature of New Zealand's population.

In rural and smaller provincial towns it can be a different picture with many still heavily dominated by women, who are often employed in part-time roles that fit with organisational needs to cover seven day services and with the needs of parenting and lifestyle. Public libraries in New Zealand remain a female dominated occupation and this has resulted in pay equity issues and lower pay rates than occupations with similar qualifications.

Digital Developments

New Zealand public libraries were progressive in adopting technologies that have improved customer service and operational efficiency as they have become available. As early as the 1950's and 60's mechanical and computer based issue systems were being implemented in some libraries and total turnkey systems began appearing in the early 1980's with online public catalogues following soon after. In 2011, the first shared library management service and resource discovery services, Kōtui was launched with Marlborough District Libraries going live in November 2011. The National Library operates the service on behalf of the member libraries with 41 local authorities now being members. It enables public libraries from across New Zealand to collaborate regardless of geographical location. Smart Libraries is



Discovery wall Turanga, central library of Christchurch City.

the other consortia which includes four local authorities and two polytechnic libraries in the greater Wellington region.

Internet access

Access to the internet in libraries first appeared in the early 1990's. Not all libraries were able to afford these technologies, or to make them available free of charge. In 2006 the National Library of New Zealand secured government funding to provide computers with access to the internet and libraries could sign up so long as they made the service freely available. The [Aotearoa People's Network Kaharoa](#) (APNK) now provides computers, laptops (chromebooks), scanners, printers, free wifi and support to 46 local authorities in New Zealand and councils contribute through a subsidised subscription. Those not members of APNK provide their own services to varying levels, with a small number still charging for computer use.

Digitisation and digital content

Many public libraries have local history collections relevant to their local area which may include books, pamphlets, newspapers, photographs and original manuscripts such as diaries. Making these more accessible through digitisation has been a work in progress through the first two decades of the 21st century. Digitising newspapers has been a collaborative project lead by the National Library and [Papers Past](#) has nearly 7 million pages of newspaper, diaries and magazines searchable using OCR software.

As well as contributing to the national newspaper repository, public libraries have been digitising other content, particularly photographs and making these available using different repository software such as the New Zealand developed [Recollect](#). Christchurch City Libraries broke new ground with their [Discovery Wall](#) in Turanga, the recently opened central library. The Discovery Wall features a digital cityscape of images, text and video from archives held by the library the Christchurch Star newspaper and submissions from the public. Users can swipe across the touch screen, bring an item to the fore and send it to someone by email. The Discovery Wall has made the Christchurch story come alive at the touch of a screen in a way not seen before in New Zealand.

The maker movement

With some notable exceptions, public libraries in New Zealand have been slower to move to providing newer technologies such as 3D printing, VR and robots or craft technologies such as sewing machines, overlockers and scan n' cut. Palmerston North City Libraries was one of the early libraries to provide such equipment accompanied by a range of programmes and events and others have followed. During the Covid-19 lockdown many libraries with 3D printers made face masks for local doctors' surgeries and others who were having trouble with supply. The slower uptake has a number of probable causes: a questioning as to whether this was a library's role, lack of expertise and knowhow by staff, and to a lesser extent, cost. This has now begun to change as more libraries see the relevance to learning, jobs and leisure. With travel to and from New Zealand being restricted for some time to come the opportunity to virtually visit places on a 'bucket list' using a VR headset is suddenly popular.

The loan of technology based kits has been introduced by some libraries – notably Hamilton City Libraries and [Selwyn District Libraries](#).

Leadership and Advocacy

[LIANZA](#), the professional association for librarians and library workers in New Zealand, has been supporting public library development since its formation in 1910. The founders were public library directors and during the early part of the twentieth century LIANZA was instrumental in advocating for improved public library services. In 2006 the first strategic framework for public libraries was published and this was quickly followed by a [Public Libraries Summit](#) in 2007, attended by business, community, local and central government leaders and librarians. It identified that public libraries needed to speak with one voice and the Association of Public Library Managers came into being in 2008. This has now morphed into the [Public Libraries of New Zealand](#) (PLNZ) which advocates and supports public library development in New Zealand. A second strategic framework was published in 2012. The idea behind the framework was to provide funders and decision makers with a clear understanding of the role(s) that public libraries have in their communities and to give library managers a starting point for putting together their own local strategies to meet local needs. A new online version is about to be published which will reflect the very significant changes that have happened in public libraries, and in society, over the past 8 years.



Johnsonville Library at Waitohi Hub, Wellington.

Leadership, of course, is not really done by 'organisations' but by the people who offer themselves to take up leadership roles in these organisations. Both LIANZA and PLNZ have paid staff but they are few in number and in the case of PLNZ, part-time. This means that people who are employed in libraries take on the voluntary roles of leadership on top of very busy day jobs. New Zealand public libraries have been fortunate to be well served by different individuals who have worked to improve the standing and funding of public libraries across New Zealand.

National Library of New Zealand

The [National Library of New Zealand Act 2003](#) has one of its purposes as "supplementing and furthering the work of other libraries in New Zealand". In the first decade of the 21st century National Library supported public libraries through the formation of the APNK, planning and setting up Kōtui, leading the first public library strategic framework in collaboration with Local Government New Zealand and public libraries, and funding and organising the first public library summit. In 2011, the National Library ceased to be a government department in its own right and became part of the Department of Internal Affairs. Its ability to affect change and improvement for public libraries was limited for a period. However, over the past three years the National Librarian has

advocated strongly for reading and the role that public libraries play in fostering reading and literacy. And most recently [Tracey Martin, the Minister](#) responsible for the National Library announced that the New Zealand government has funded a \$58.8 million stimulus package to enable public libraries to support digital literacy and job seekers over the next two years as the country recovers from the economic shocks caused by the pandemic.

International relationships

New Zealand is about as far away from the rest of the world as anywhere! We are inveterate travellers (or we were before Covid-19 came along). Librarians will visit libraries when overseas, attend conferences and generally keep up to date with what is happening in the world of public libraries through reading and networking.

New Zealand was fortunate to be part of the International Network of Public Libraries funded by the Bertelsmann Stiftung from 1996-2003 and two senior librarians had the opportunity to contribute to the international research and thinking (myself and Allison Dobbie, who at the time was Libraries and Information Manager Auckland Libraries). These international connections, and those formed by others, have had significant spinoff with young New Zealand librarians having the opportunity to be part of INELI and INELI Oceania. It is very clear to me that

maintaining international connections – not just with Western nations but with those from developing and transitioning countries – has had very significant benefits for driving change and thinking in New Zealand public libraries.

Indigenous Services

Māori are the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand. [Te Tiriti o Waitangi](#) (The Treaty of Waitangi), signed in 1840, between the Crown and the leaders of most Māori tribes governs the relationship between Māori – the tangata whenua (indigenous people) – and everyone else, and ensures the rights of both Māori and Pakeha (non-Māori) are protected. Increasingly the relationship has moved to being one of partnership enabling Māori to control their own resources and to make decisions related to the health, wellbeing and economic future of their people. The reo (language) and cultural way of life (tikanga) are vital to ensuring their strength and mana.



From the mid 1980's libraries began to focus on what was needed to develop a bicultural approach to services for Māori. This involved the creation of positions for Māori Services Librarians, having bicultural signage and using Māori subject headings in catalogues. In November 1992 a hui (meeting) of Māori librarians and library workers formed Te Rōpū Whakahau as a special interest group (SIG) of LIANZA. In 1996 [Te Rōpū Whakahau](#) became its own incorporated society and in 1997 signed a formal partnership agreement with LIANZA. This strong partnership continues today.

As the New Zealand Government moved more formally to honour the Treaty through legislation and redress of grievances, the understanding of what it means to be bicultural developed. Libraries have responded by having a focus on te Reo, providing collections in the language, organising Māori language story times, providing online resources in te Reo and seeking to develop services in a partnership approach. This is not always straightforward and it has meant needing to give up power and control by libraries on how and what they offer. This is an area of service which will change and develop as libraries and their local authorities find new ways of engaging with Iwi to provide services that meet Māori needs in a culturally appropriate way.

Funding

The majority of funding for public libraries comes from property taxes (known as rates) which local governments levy to provide a wide range of infrastructure and services. There is no legislation governing public libraries but they are referenced in the Local Government Act 2002¹. Unlike Australia there has been no direct state or central government funding into libraries although the National Library of New Zealand provides a subsidised subscription service for the provision of computers and access to the internet, the Aotearoa People's Network Kaharoa (APNK) and the one off \$58.8 million fund outlined above.

Other revenue comes from charges for such things as fines, hold fees, rental charges for some types of items and printing and copying. The amount gathered through this means ranges from 1-2% up to 10-12% depending on the local authority and their fee regime. There is no consistent policy on fees and charges and each local authority sets their own policy and parameters. Leading the way is Selwyn District Council which has recently removed all fines and they have no charges for holds or rentals on books or magazines. Others, mainly smaller and medium sized local authorities, still have a charge on some stock, usually fiction and magazines and one or two charge for using a public computer to access the internet.



Tupu Youth Library Auckland.

The Value of Public Libraries

Over the past decade and a half significant work has gone in to articulating the value that public libraries have for communities. Librarians have been arguing and demonstrating that value by strategically positioning libraries as part of the social infrastructure for community based learning and creative recreation. Public libraries are a local government service, and as indicated above, are almost entirely funded from local taxes. This means libraries compete for funding that is needed for water, roads, parks, waste management and the myriad of responsibilities for which local government is responsible. Being able to argue the case for the value that libraries make, not only to improved social cohesion and community connectedness, but also to the economy that derives from a strong library, is essential.

The value of literacy and reading for pleasure is receiving greater attention currently. There is evidence to indicate a direct correlation between limited or no literacy leading to reduced life choices, poverty and crime. Over half New Zealand's prison population is functionally illiterate. The work that public libraries are doing developing readers in the under 5's and across all age groups, is vital.

The value of libraries as community and civic space is also being recognised. In a world that is increasingly lived online, libraries provide a non-commercial, accessible public space that is not work or home (the third space). Palmerston North City Libraries was the first public library in New Zealand to use the term 'living room of the city' – a place where people could feel at home, use the space for their own learning or creative recreation and participate in events and programmes. In a time when the world is changing so rapidly, the library as a place of debate, the agora of our time, is another important value that libraries are playing.

The value of libraries as partners is more and more being recognised by others with similar values and goals. Libraries have the spaces, knowledge resources, technology and people to help make things happen. But this is not a one way partnership. Libraries need partners to complement and bring in expertise that they don't have. Christchurch City Libraries, for example, has partnered with [Imagination Station](#) to provide Lego-based activities promoting science and technology for children. For libraries to keep up-to-date with the latest technologies for customer experience, then partnering with IT, AV and digital companies can be a bonus.



The value of libraries in supporting economic development is slowly being recognised. The \$58.8 million stimulus package is a clear indication that central government is beginning to understand the value that public libraries have in supporting job seekers, digital literacy and entrepreneurial activity.

Challenges and Opportunities

So what are the challenges and opportunities for public libraries in New Zealand? In my view they fall in to four areas:

- Funding – there is pressure on budgets as a result of Covid-19 and the impact that has had on local authority revenues. For the majority of libraries needing to find operational savings there is little room for reducing budgets without having an impact on services. Salaries are a significant part of budgets and we tend to see job vacancies not filled. Other moves have seen very reduced collection budgets and library hours reduced.
- Inequities in service – there is not a consistent level of public library service across New Zealand. Libraries set their own policies around loan periods, fees and what they will charge for. PLNZ is advocating for a more whole-of-country approach but has no power to effect change. Smaller local authorities do not provide the same range of services as will be found in larger towns and cities. APNK and Kōtui went some way towards consistent levels of service for internet access and online catalogues but they are not universal. Even where there are opportunities to have regional collaboration because of the shared underpinning technologies, there is a lack of leadership and commitment at executive levels within local authorities to move forward.
- Staff skills and development – there is pressure on staff to keep up with digital developments and be proficient with new technologies. Some of this is about having the time available and some is about aptitude. Diversity in staff – gender, ethnicity and age – is difficult in smaller library systems and we have a predominance of middle aged women in some places. While this need not be an issue if leaders are aware of the potential bias in such things as collection development, it does mean that libraries are not reflective of their communities as well as they might be.
- Partnership and collaboration – this is both a challenge and an opportunity. It can be challenging to find the time and make the effort to work with others – and often



Teens in Turanga, central library of Christchurch City.

time is a real constraint for libraries who find the bulk of their work day is taken up with face to face customer service. Having the willingness to give up some of the control can also be an issue. Librarians are passionate about the services they offer but sometimes this may not be what people want or need – or they need it but delivered in a different way or place. In New Zealand’s case the most important partnership is that to be fostered with Māori. This requires commitment and preparedness to work in different cultural ways. Taking the time to learn about tikanga and be able to deliver a mihi in te Reo is a minimum requirement. It takes time, sincerity and commitment to develop relationship. Improved services delivered for and with Māori is the benefit.

Conclusion

In general, New Zealanders have been strong supporters and users of public libraries. Many of those who might not use them currently see the value in libraries. Annual council surveys generally report between 85 and 97% satisfaction with services and libraries usually lead the popularity polls of all council services.

If we want to retain this support, our libraries will need to continue to adapt and change. Covid-19 has shown the value of online service delivery and this provides an opportunity to engage with a wider audience. However this is not at the expense of physical library service delivery which is so important for social connectedness. Connecting with new audiences and continuing to attract younger demographics is important. We need to continue to adapt services in response to community and customer led design while remaining true to the underpinning values and purpose of a public library.

About the author

Catherine Lau is the Assistant Chief Executive of the Public Library Group of National Library Board (NLB) since April 2015. She oversees operation of 26 public libraries, planning and development of new libraries, as well as content and programme development to promote Readers for Life.

Prior to her posting in NLB, Catherine was the Director of Strategic Planning Division at the Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI) since 2010. While at MCI, Catherine worked closely with NLB in developing the Library of the Future Master Plan. Since 2015, she has moved to NLB to lead the implementation of the Master Plan and has overseen 7 libraries being revamped. In 2018 and 2019, this has reversed the downward trends of library usage. NLB has since secured additional funding for the next phase of the Master Plan. Apart from the Master Plan, her current focus is to lead service transformation so that libraries can support lifelong learning, especially among adults.

Catherine believes that public libraries must continue to evolve to keep up with the fast changes in the information landscape. Despite the prevalence of free information in the internet, public libraries can continue to be an endearing institution, providing greater value-added services and more customised information to the public.



More Than Just Books – Singapore's Public Libraries

by Catherine Lau (Singapore)

Until 25 years ago, there were just a handful of public libraries in Singapore: the main National Library on Stamford Road, with a history dating back to 1837, along with several branch libraries built from the 1970s onwards in public housing estates located in various parts of the island. Today, there are 26 Public Libraries managed by the National Library Board (NLB), housed in new or refurbished spaces that offer collections, services and programmes that are customised to the specific communities they serve. NLB also manages the National Library, which focuses on the collection and preservation of heritage and reference materials, and the National Archives of Singapore.

At a time where global library usage rates are declining and people are questioning the use of public funds to keep libraries going, Singapore's libraries have been able to reverse the trend of falling library users and decreasing book loans. How did the NLB pull off this feat?

In 1995, the public library system underwent a sea change when a new entity called the National Library Board was formed as a result of *Library 2000*, a masterplan framing the development of Singapore's libraries for the new millennium.¹ As a key pillar of the country's learning infrastructure, a reinvigorated public library system was needed to provide the

resources that Singaporeans would require to help them find their feet in the new global economy.

A decade later, in 2005, an updated *Library 2010* masterplan was rolled out to keep up with the changing times.² While physical visits to Singapore's public libraries peaked in 2008, and loans of physical books hit a new high in 2012, there would be alarming declines in subsequent years. Social media, smartphone adoption and seismic changes in how information and content are created and consumed have all had a profound impact on public libraries everywhere, and Singapore has not been spared.

We realised that any new blueprint for the public library system would have to grapple with fundamental changes in the global information landscape. Libraries could no longer simply be buildings containing books where people would hopefully visit. NLB has had to redefine and reshape the library experience to keep in step with the new demands of a globalised world. Enter *Libraries of the Future 2030 (LOTF 2030)*, a 15-year masterplan that was launched in 2015 to transform libraries from mere information repositories to platforms for community learning and engagement.³ More importantly, *LOTF 2030* called for a complete rethink of Singapore's library infrastructure

- 1 **Tan, C.N.** (1994). *Library 2000: Investing in a learning nation: Report of the Library 2000 Review Committee*. Singapore: Ministry of Information and the Arts. (Call no.: RSING 027.05957 SIN)
- 2 **National Library Board.** (2005). *Library 2010: Libraries for life, knowledge for success*. Singapore: National Library Board. (Call no.: RSING q027.55957 SIN-[LIB])
- 3 **Hong, X.** (2019). *The remaking of Singapore's public libraries*. Singapore: National Library Board. Retrieved from BookSG.
- 4 **Department for Culture, Media and Sport,** ([PDF Taking Part 2015/16 Quarter 4](#) (2016) 4.; A. Flood, 'Library use in England fell dramatically over last decade, figures show' in: [The Guardian](#), August 16, 2016)
- 5 **Horrigan J.B.** (2016, September 9). [Library usage and engagement](#).

as well as the programmes and services it offered. LOTF 2030 raised the bar higher than ever before: redesigned libraries would not just arrest the decline in visitor ship, but also achieve a 3 percent year-on-year increase in loans. It was a bold gamble, considering the downward global trend in library use.

In the UK, a 2016 report by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport noted that just 33.4 percent of adults had used a public library in the previous 12 months, compared with 48.2 percent a decade earlier.⁴ In the US, a 2016 Pew Research Centre report found that 48 percent of Americans (aged 16 years and above) surveyed had visited a library in the previous 12 months, down from 53 percent in 2012.⁵ Fortunately, NLB has several advantages it could leverage on. In a high-density city-state such as Singapore, all 26 branches of its public library network are within easy reach of its users. Compared to the library system in Washington D.C., which has 26 branches serving a population of 600,000, the same number of libraries in Singapore services some 5.8 million people. As a result, Singapore's public libraries report higher penetration rates compared to similar library systems in other developed countries.

It has also helped that libraries in Singapore have been an important part of the education ecosystem. Parents here have

always viewed libraries as a valuable public resource to help their children cultivate good reading habits, which libraries in turn have worked hard over the years to respond to.

Building and Operating Libraries

With people moving to housing estates further away from the main population centres, access to libraries was becoming a problem, and facilities were getting outdated. From 1997 onwards, NLB began setting up libraries in areas where people congregate, such as shopping malls and town hubs that host a variety of community services and which attract high traffic due to their proximity to transport nodes. Examples of libraries in shopping malls are Jurong West Public Library (1996), the library@orchard targeted at young adults (1999) and the completely self-service Sengkang Public Library (2002). Marine Parade Public library (2000) is an example of a library housed in a community building.

Situating libraries in shopping malls has paid off for the NLB and mall developers as both parties have benefited from the increased foot traffic. More recently, we have also begun expanding and re-configuring



Childrens department Woodlands Library, Singapore 2004. Photo: Ton van Vlimmeren

older mall libraries by taking advantage of an urban planning scheme that incentivises developers to set aside community spaces within commercial buildings. Over time, we plan to move more of our standalone libraries to shopping malls and town hubs as part of our effort to make library spaces more accessible to people.

Apart from the physical space, we realised the library experience must extend beyond basic collections and services. In the past, a similar design prototype was replicated throughout the library network, with collections and services that were identical in nature. The LOTF 2030 masterplan now called for customised libraries to meet the needs of specific communities.

The revamped library@orchard, which reopened in 2014 at a new location in Orchard Gateway mall, in the heart of the city's downtown shopping street, became the first test case. Two years before any actual work began, the planners carried out focus group discussions with potential users using Design Thinking methodology and studied the demographics of the area in order to better engage with the community. The result is a chic and modern space with a collection that

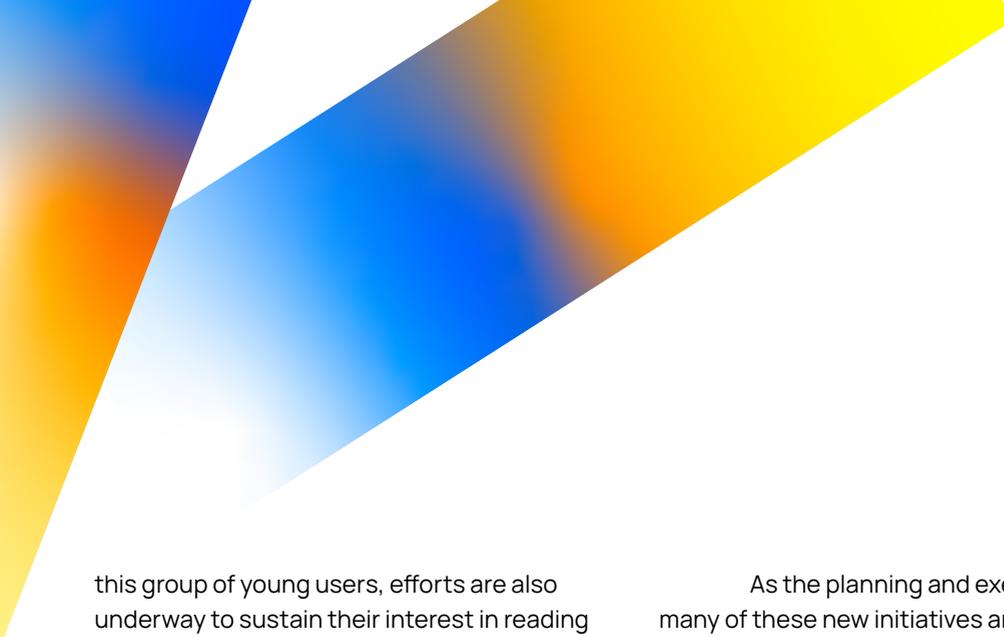
leans heavily on design and lifestyle titles that are arranged in five thematic clusters: Space, Product, Visual, People and Lifestyle. Interspersed within the library are spaces that cater for formal talks, informal sharing sessions and hands-on programmes that teach art and design.

A similar approach to planning has resulted in new customised spaces, collections and programmes for libraries in the suburbs. Without sacrificing the needs of the average library user, new and revamped libraries are redesigned to target specific age groups. As a result, Sengkang Public Library for tweens, Bedok Public Library for seniors and Yishun Public Library for adults, to name a few, were opened in quick succession between 2017 and 2018. New services that are piloted in these libraries are then refined and rolled out in other branches. The reality of course is not so straightforward. Clearly any library that targets a specific age group or demographic should not alienate the larger community of library users.

Sengkang, for instance, a new town in the north-eastern part of Singapore, has a younger demographic population comprising families with young children under the age of 14. But even as Sengkang Public Library engages



Tampines Regional Library integrated with other community amenities.



this group of young users, efforts are also underway to sustain their interest in reading as they transition into their teenage and young adult years. At the same time, the needs of older users in Sengkang town are catered for with quieter spaces and collections that are sheltered away from the children's zones.

Bedok town, in the eastern part of Singapore, has a wider demographic base than Sengkang. But we also recognised that Bedok, being an older town, is home to a significant number of seniors and retirees. So while Bedok Public Library caters for children and teenagers, the Learning Zone on the second floor of the library targets an older demographic population with a more peaceful space dedicated to books on health, travel, cooking and self-help titles as well as newspapers, magazines and large-print books.

For older Singaporeans who are less mobile, non-slip floors, hand rails and ergonomically-designed seating have been integrated as part of the design as are corridors and wider-than-usual spaces between shelves that provide access for the navigation of wheelchairs and other mobility devices. The inclusion of a digital video magnifier and e-newspaper booths that allow seniors to increase the size of the font is another first in this library. Programmes at the library teach senior citizens basic digital and technological skills.

As the planning and execution of many of these new initiatives are manpower intensive, NLB had to find ways to roll them out without an increase in staffing. Technological innovation was an obvious tool, but what if we got the community involved in the day-to-day operations of the library? It seemed like a bold gamble at the time, but we started from a good place: libraries have always been among the most frequently used arts and cultural institutions in Singapore, and the NLB has been particularly successful in shoring up a reservoir of public goodwill over the years.

We decided on our first test: library@chinatown. This would become Singapore's first wholly volunteer-run public library when it opened its doors in 2013. Emboldened by our initial efforts in recruiting volunteers, we introduced a new operating model at library@chinatown, doing away with staffed counters for basic library services and encouraging a culture of self-help. Our experience in running library@chinatown gave us invaluable lessons when it came to the running of subsequent volunteer-run libraries or sections within libraries. Since then, we have continued to evolve and fine-tune the model to expand the scope of volunteer contributions. Today, every public library has its own volunteer network with volunteers running entire floors in many revamped libraries. NLB currently has some 5,000 active volunteers between the ages



Hands-on learning at the makerspaces in Tampines Regional Library.

of 4 and 90 on call, comprising retirees and housewives as well as working adults and teens.

Despite our best efforts, the reality is that there will always be communities that may not be able to access our libraries easily. For this reason, plans are afoot to work with community partners to deliver library services – likely satellite libraries that are funded and operated by community partners – to people who are underserved in Singapore. Two such examples are the Changi Simei Community Library and Our West Coast Library. Both were set up by NLB with pre-loved books, and volunteers were trained to operate these community libraries and conduct programmes like story-telling sessions for children.

Harnessing Technology

Technology has played a pivotal role in the success of our libraries. The NLB Mobile app, introduced in 2014, has been especially well received. The app allows users to browse and

borrow both physical and electronic books and other reading materials using their smartphones. For working adults, this is a real boon: remote access to a wide range of digital material such as e-books, e-magazines, and e-newspapers. People can even sign up and attend virtual learning courses on topics ranging from business to creative design on the NLB Mobile app.

Technology has also played a big role as jobs for staff are redesigned. To ease the workload of older staff and volunteers, book auto-sorting machines have been introduced at all libraries. Books returned via book drops are now automatically sorted by these machines into their respective category bins for easy shelving by staff. Another noteworthy innovation is the use of self-service reservation lockers, first introduced at library@orchard. Instead of picking up reserved books at the counter, users now reserve a book online and receive an email or text notifying them when the books arrive. At the library, they scan their library card at a machine, make their payment and pick up the reserved item. In addition, all new and refurbished libraries feature dedicated lobbies

that are open 24 hours every day. So even when the main library is closed, visitors can enter the lobby to access reservation lockers and book drops as well as electronic screens which enable them to browse digital books, newspapers and magazines available for loans, as well as read about upcoming events and programmes.

The success of these prototypes has paved the way for system-wide adoption even as we continue to introduce new innovations such as shelf-reading robots and geospatial technologies to aid library planning. These innovations have freed library staff from mundane and repetitive tasks, allowing them to be trained in new areas of work and to be redeployed to jobs that harness their new skills.

Customised Collections and Programmes

Our collections and programmes are specially curated to reach out to different age groups and segments of Singapore society. Underpinning this is the idea that no one should be left behind as the dynamics of education, employability and society evolve in response to globalisation and advances in technology.

In 2014, we pioneered the Early Literacy Library for children aged 6 and below, which emphasises experiential learning and categorises books according to different pre-reading skills within a library space specially designed for children. Around the same time, Read@School was rolled out to over 300 primary and secondary schools, engaging older children and teens between the ages of 7 and 17 to develop a love for reading and learning. With children and teens taken care of, we turned our attention to adults and seniors. This is a demographic that has come under the microscope in recent years as jobs are disrupted because of technology, and retirement is pushed back in the face of a rapidly ageing population.

How can libraries support the needs of this group of people who are already grappling with competing demands for their time? Learning does not stop when formal education ends; 'lifelong learning' or the pursuit of knowledge for both professional and personal development is a continuum that has no fixed endpoint.

Of paramount importance is information literacy and digital literacy, two areas that cut across age, ethnicity, and gender divides, and encapsulate what NLB defines as lifelong learning. Our information literacy programme called SURE (Source, Understand, Research, Evaluate) has been in place since

- 6 **NLB's** three regional libraries are located in the housing estates of Tampines, Jurong and Woodlands. A new regional library will be opening in Punggol Town Hub in the latter half of 2021. Compared with public libraries, regional libraries are much bigger and feature larger and specialised collections as well as services and programmes to cater to different target groups.
- 7 For other statistics, see 2019 **Year-in-Review**
[↗ PDF NLB2019yearinreview](#)

2013, initially targeting youths only. Today, given the proliferation of fake news in both social and the traditional media, the scope has widened to include working adults and seniors. Of particular concern are seniors who fall prey to fake news scams.

Given the global digital revolution and the Singapore government's push towards a 'Smart Nation' – the harnessing of digital technologies to transform the way people live, work and play – digital literacy has become another area of concern for the NLB. New digital literacy programmes have been introduced to make technology more accessible. These take many forms, including hands-on workshops on subjects such 3D printing, basic coding and robotics in dedicated makerspaces at Tampines Regional Library and Jurong Regional Library.⁶ These offer opportunities for like-minded people to come together to explore, learn and create.

As a result, our public libraries have become community spaces where socialisation and knowledge acquisition take place simultaneously, both online and offline. There are now as many ways to access library resources as there are platforms for sharing information, ideas and experiences that support learning.

Conclusion

What is the result of our journey so far? On average, numbers of loans and visitor ship have increased by 44 percent and 59 percent respectively for the six libraries – Sengkang, Bukit Panjang, Tampines, Bedok, Yishun and Harbourfront – that were redesigned between 2017 and 2019. According to the annual NLB REACH survey, the usage of public libraries increased from five in 10 residents in 2015 to seven in 10 residents in 2019.⁷

While the immediate path ahead has been forged, the challenge is to keep refining and improving our services and programmes. Whatever innovations the NLB has introduced in the past decade will not be enough because the world will keep on changing, as the current Covid-19 pandemic has amply demonstrated, and libraries must continue to be attuned to these changes. The only constant, even as the ground shifts beneath us, is our mission to advocate lifelong learning and reading among Singaporeans.



Specially designed tinker truck for children at the library@harbourfront.

About the author

Vicki McDonald is a key player in the transformation of the library sector in Queensland. As state librarian and chief executive officer of the state library of Queensland she understands the need for a strong, relevant and innovative library service. Her national and international experience led to her appointment at the state library in 2016 following a career of passionate library advocacy that began with her first job as a library assistant at the Dalby-Wambo public library. She has worked in public, academic and state libraries.

Vicki is a past president of the Australian Library Information Association. She is also very active in the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), as chair of the professional committee she is an ex officio member of its governing board. She is also a member of IFLA's Asia Oceania section standing committee.

In March 2019 Vicki was awarded an ALIA Fellowship in recognition of her exceptionally high standard of proficiency in library and information science. In January 2020, Vicki was awarded a member in the general division of the Order of Australia 'for significant service to librarianship, and to professional associations'.



Innovation and Resilience – A Response to Covid-19

by Vicki McDonald (Australia)

2020 has been a year like no other. The impact of Covid-19 has been experienced across the globe. What was initially reported as a health crisis, quickly became an economic crisis that threatens the livelihood of those infected, but also their employer, community, state, and nation. It has subsequently impacted all areas of human endeavour. This contribution will explore how the libraries of Queensland have been impacted by Covid-19.

Public Libraries in Queensland

Public libraries in Queensland are a local government responsibility. The total investment by local governments to public libraries is \$230M.

The Queensland government through the State Library makes a financial contribution through two grant programs. The Public Library Grant provides annual funding of approximately \$25M which is indexed to population growth. An additional \$5M per annum is for the 'First 5 Forever early literacy initiative'. Both grants have a methodology which is reviewed every three years and managed through service level agreements.

The library network comprises the State Library of Queensland (SLQ), independent libraries, which are wholly managed by local government, Rural Libraries Queensland (RLQ) and IKCs.

One of State Library's role is to advocate for public libraries and partner with 75 local governments to enable a thriving state-wide network of 320 Queensland public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs).

Independent Libraries are library services operated in councils with populations over 15,000. These library services are controlled by the local council, subject to the terms of the service level agreement with the Library Board. State Library provides an annual cash Public Library Grant directly to the council to support the development of its library collection.

RLQ represents a collaboration between local governments and the State Library of Queensland to provide high quality public library services to rural Queensland. Regional councils with populations under 15,000 are eligible to join RLQ. These library services are controlled by the local regional council, subject to the terms of the service level agreement with the Library Board. In lieu of receiving the cash grant, RLQ

library's equivalent grant is contributed to the development of a lending collection which is circulated amongst RLQ libraries. They also have access to limited cash grants.

IKCs represent a collaboration between Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander shire councils and State Library to provide high quality public library services and cultural keeping places in these communities. Councils are responsible for the physical infrastructure, staffing and day to day operations of their IKC. The State Library contributes financial support to councils to assist with operational costs including staffing, library collections and professional development. State Library also collaborates closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Shire Councils to provide guidance and assistance on programs, activities and events delivered through IKCs to sustain ongoing knowledge transfer.

Covid-19: the Queensland Context

Queensland's first case of Covid-19 was confirmed on 29 January 2020. This event triggered the State Library convening its crisis management team and activating its pandemic plan at 'alert and lean forward' phase. The existence of the plan enabled an organised immediate response and provided ongoing guidance. The immediate actions were to commence implementing Queensland Health's directions, determining communication priorities, and identifying and prioritising personal protective equipment (PPE) that needed to be acquired.

	Norway	Queensland
Population (as at 1/3/20)	5,433,299 ¹	5,160,023 ²
Confirmed cases	15,524	1,161
Recoveries	11,863	1,152
Deaths	275 ³	6 ⁴

- 1 **Norway Population.** [↗worldometers.info](https://worldometers.info)
- 2 **Queensland population counter.** [↗qgso.qld.gov.au](https://qgso.qld.gov.au)
- 3 **Covid-19 data Norway.** [↗worldometers.info](https://worldometers.info)
- 4 **Queensland Covid-19 statistics.** [↗qld.gov.au](https://qld.gov.au)
- 5 **Press conference australian parliament.** [↗pm.gov.au](https://pm.gov.au)
- 6 **Roadmap to easing access restrictions** for Queensland's remote communities. [↗PDF Remote communities roadmap](#)
- 7 **Brisbane Seniors Online.** Roadmap to easing Queensland's restrictions. [↗PDF Covid roadmap](#)

On 16 March 2020, the role of coordinating State Library's response moved from the crisis management team to a newly formed Covid planning group. At this time, the State Disaster Centre directed agencies to move from 'alert and lean forward' to 'stand-up' phase.

After passing the six-month milestone since the full closure a great deal has been learnt, but there is still so much uncertainty.

It is evident that the situation in Queensland is very different to other parts of the globe. In comparison with international jurisdictions, Queensland has been able to manage Covid-19 within the community remarkably well. If we take Norway, which has a comparable population, we can see just how well Queensland has fared in the pandemic by taking strong measures and implementing restrictions:

Covid-19 Impact on Queensland Libraries

Due to the escalating situation, the Library Board of Queensland (Library Board) made the decision to close the State Library 23 March 2020. A similar decision was taken by other cultural institutions co-located in the

Queensland Cultural Centre: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Queensland Museum and Queensland Performing Arts Centre. From Wednesday 25 March 2020, libraries – along with galleries, museums, historic sites, community centres, youth centres, local government non-essential services and swimming pools – were required to close their doors to the public. On this date, all public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres (across Queensland closed their doors to comply with federal government directives.⁵ Some Queensland communities, specifically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities, had greater restrictions on movement due to the biosecurity areas being imposed.⁶

As Covid-19 cases came under control, the Queensland government initiated the Roadmap to easing restrictions. Stage 1 Covid restrictions commenced on 16 May 2020 which allowed up to ten visitors where one person per four square metres was possible, compulsory recording of contact tracing details and social distancing of 1.5 metres.⁷ In some of Queensland's smaller library spaces and IKCs this meant that fewer than ten people were permitted in each venue.

Visitor complies with conditions of entry when Infozone reopens to the public, 18 May, 2020. Photo: Leif Ekstrom.



From 18 May 2020, despite State Library having a floor space of 22,000 square metres, access was limited to only ten clients. It was determined that since the public library service was offering access to collections, the most urgent need in the community that the State Library should address was access to the internet accompanied by printing and scanning. There was immediate demand for this service with many clients seeking to email friends and family, communicate with government departments and undertake personal business. Clients were permitted forty-minute sessions, and following each session cleaners sanitised keyboards, tables, and chairs. Managing client access to venues and facilities together with quarantining materials added many tasks to daily operations in libraries. Some library services across Queensland did not open in Stage 1 but continued to provide a range of online services and 'click and collect' style contactless services.

From 3 June 2020, the Queensland government Stage 2 restrictions permitted an increase to twenty people. Based on client

demand the State Library also opened study spaces in a separate building. The requirement of one person per four square metres, provision of contact tracing details and social distancing remains a mandatory requirement.

On 19 June 2020, Queensland Health approved State Library's Covid-Safe Site Plan (the Plan) which establishes and documents a process to safely reopen the State Library to the general public in accordance with government-issued directives, guidelines and resources. It enabled multiples spaces within the building to be opened and provides assurance to staff and clients that appropriate procedures are in place. As additional spaces and services are opened, Queensland Health is required to approve an Addendum to the Plan.

From 3 July 2020, Queensland entered Stage 3, increasing the numbers allowed in library spaces to 100 people, while still requiring the one person per four square metres social distancing to apply together with contact tracing requirements.

Closed sign at State Library of Queensland.
Photo: Dave Crane.



From 10 July 2020, the quarantine requirements and travel restrictions for Queensland's remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander communities were lifted.

As of 1 October 2020, many libraries have not reinstated their onsite public programs due to local risk assessments and the constraints of social distancing. Subsequently, State Library has developed an Event Plan, a supplementary document to our Covid-Safe Site Plan, which outlines the key considerations and requirements for public-facing events. State Library held its first venue hire event since the building closed in March 2020 on 10 September 2020 and hosted a wedding on 3 October 2020. venue hire is a key revenue stream, so the ability to recommence venue hire is a key milestone in the State Library's recovery plan.

Closure of State Library: Immediate Priorities

The decision to close any public institution is significant and the State Library's closure on 23 March 2020 initiated a range of key responses. Communication to clients

and partners is a key priority. The website and social media advised of the decision and provided information on services available online. It was a somewhat surreal experience: staff vacating the workplace with no timeframe for return and a palpable fear of the likelihood each person would acquire the virus and up to fifty percent of staff would be infected by Covid-19, at any time.

It was not the first time that staff have been excluded from the workplace: the most recent event was the Brisbane floods in 2011 when the building was closed for five weeks. What was different this time, however, was that the driver for closure was the nature of this disaster, a health pandemic. In previous closures there was limited or no access to the building. In 2020, however, there was a fully functional building, but the exclusion of staff to deliver services onsite.

With a threatened workforce, the initial concern was to 'protect' and secure the availability of staff. Team-leaders were asked to document every team member's technology access at home, how they travelled to work, carer responsibilities and any pre-existing health concerns. The aim was to gather details that would enable future decision-making. An 'agile teams' approach was adopted: each team was split into two groups. Each week one group would be on site, the other group working remotely. At no time would

- 8 **State Library of Queensland.** Digital Strategy: digital by design. [↗digitalstrategy.slq.qld.gov.au](https://digitalstrategy.slq.qld.gov.au)
- 9 **Government Media Statement:** 'Student free days for Queensland state schools next week'. [↗statements.qld.gov.au](https://statements.qld.gov.au)
- 10 **State Library of Queensland.** Learning from Home. [↗slq.qld.gov.au](https://slq.qld.gov.au)

these two groups be in the workplace together. If staff were infected, service continuity would be maintained. This plan, however, was activated for only two weeks prior to the library's closure.

With the closure of the workplace, the priority was enabling staff to work remotely. Firstly, provision of the equipment (where required) to perform work remotely: computers, multiple screens, printers, scanners, ergonomic chairs. Secondly, identifying what work could be done remotely. The importance of communication and maintaining connection has been emphasised throughout the pandemic. In addition to communiques to staff following each of Covid Planning Group meetings, there is a fortnightly newsletter, monthly video briefing by the CEO and regular information sessions for people leaders. An informal 'chit chat with the CEO' is offered on a weekly basis – staff are encouraged to join a zoom call to ask about any concerns.

In mid-April 2020, a Wellness Survey was conducted to help understand how staff were coping with the changes to the work environment during the Covid-19 period. The anonymous survey was completed by 79% of staff, and the feedback helped to inform how the Covid Planning Group supported staff. Overall, the feedback indicated that teams were connecting well, and staff had the tools they needed to work remotely. It also identified

focus areas for improving work life balance for some staff. The survey was repeated in July 2020 and it revealed a strong preference from staff to continue working flexibly into the future. Whilst the transition back to the workplace has commenced, ensuring staff are connected and feel safe continues to be a priority. The focus on connection has been maintained throughout the pandemic and many team leaders (people managers) report that they feel more connected with their colleagues than ever before. They have been welcomed into homes, met partners and children, introduced to pets – all through zoom!

The Pivot to Digital Delivery

By week three, it was evident that a longer-term approach for service delivery in a Covid-19 environment was required. The reference enquiry services were being delivered; but what other services could be delivered? The website and social media channels were the key mechanisms for communication: but could they be used more for service delivery?

One of the most important decisions was to reassign a senior manager to a new role of director Digital Delivery. Whilst State Library has a strong web and social media presence, the responsibility of this new role would be to



Senior Conservator, Rachel Spano delivers a webinar on caring for children's artwork as part of State Library's Big Voices exhibition. Photo: Joe Ruckli.

deliver an enhanced, innovative online offer for collections, programs, and services. Essentially, State Library from home: online, anytime, anywhere. The focus was to build capability to deliver on the existing digital strategy: digital by design.⁹ It was an opportunity to explore and deliver on the aspirations of the digital strategy and ensure existing clients were retained, but also to attract new audiences that would continue to use services into the future. The scope of digital delivery is the online presence: websites, catalogue, external collection platforms, and all forms of digital communication including social media. The director leads the Digital Delivery Task Force which brings together managers from across the organisation to plan, develop and deliver a curated digital experience.

This coordinated approach of pivoting to digital delivery resulted in key achievements, including:

- Learning from home: Queensland schools were closed from 30 March 2020,⁹ with parents and carers taking responsibility for home schooling. 'Learning from home' is an aggregated web presence of collection resources, online tools, supporting the Australian curriculum.¹⁰ It was developed to support students, parents, and teachers to inspire, challenge and engage.
- Spoken: celebrating Queensland language. The exhibition in the slq Gallery provided visitors with an opportunity to explore the diverse, yet fragile nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. When the exhibition closed early due to Covid-19, a virtual exhibition was created to enable



ANZAC memorial exhibiton in normal time, Dudley Denny Library, Mackay, Queensland.

viewers to experience the Spoken exhibition from home, through an interactive self-guided tour.¹¹ This virtual tour provides a legacy of the exhibition through access to curated collections, oral histories and performance.

- Photo: two decades of Queensland photography exhibition. A planned exhibition in the slq Gallery was pivoted to an online exhibition.¹² The exhibition showcasing contemporary Queensland photography for the past 20 years, was supported by a program of online discussions between the curator and photographers. In the first two months there were 80,000 views of the exhibition, contributing 10% to State Library's total views.
- Anzac Day: for the first time since the Spanish Influenza in 1919, Australians were unable to come together to commemorate the Australian New Zealand Army Corps of the first World War on Anzac Day. As curators of Brisbane's Anzac Square Memorial Galleries, State Library staff delivered 'commemorate differently'¹³. It brought together opportunities to explore collections: Flickr albums, oral histories,

digital stories, and webinars. Partnering with Alkira Software and supported by voice assistants Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant, a voice activated app presented collections in a new platform. Listeners could explore oral histories and diaries of past and present serving members of the Australian armed forces, play the Last Post and be guided through a minute's silence. The app also allowed users to request a poppy be left on their behalf at the galleries. In five days over 265 requests were received from across Australia, New Zealand, United States and United Kingdom. This app has subsequently been recognised as Best Collaboration During a Crisis at the 2020 Online Start-up and Innovation Awards¹⁴ and Silver Award winner (Digital - Expanded Service or Application) at DrivenxDesign BNE20.¹⁵

- Storytime: like many libraries, the regular story time was pivoted to online from April 2020. This pivot was enabled by an important collaboration between the Australian Booksellers Association (ABA), the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), the Australian Publishers Association (APA) and

- 11 **State Library of Queensland**. Spoken exhibition. slq.qld.gov.au
- 12 **State Library of Queensland**. Twenty: two decades of Queensland photography. slq.qld.gov.au
- 13 **State Library of Queensland**. Anzac Day 2020: Commemorate Differently. slq.qld.gov.au
- 14 **YBF Ventures**. 2020 Online Startup and Innovation Awards. ybfventures.com
- 15 **DrivenxDesign**. Award Programs. BNE20. drivenxdesign.com
- 16 **Australian Library and Information Association**. Book industry partners come to agreement on copyright. alia.org.au
- 17 **State Library of Queensland**. Jarjum Stories Live! slq.qld.gov.au
- 18 **Libraries Act 1988** (Qld). [PDF Libraries Act](#)

the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) which agreed a special arrangement for library story times during the Covid-19 outbreak. Essentially, the Boards of the APA and ASA agreed that their members suspend any requirements for copyright permission to be sought enabled libraries across Australia to deliver recordings or livestream story times.¹⁶ Every Thursday, story time became 'Jarjum Stories Live!' building on State Library's strong reputation for First Nations expertise, 'Jarjum Stories Live!' is a free streamed session involving First Nations children's storybooks guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander creatives.¹⁷ Average views of each sessions is 2,600 and achieved an audience reach of 80,000 across ten sessions.

- Building access to e-resources: State Library subscribes to a wide range of e-resources for adults and children. A campaign to increase online registration with immediate access to e-content delivered a 19 per cent increase in membership and 37 per cent increase in use of electronic resources.

Documenting Covid-19

One of State Library's collecting responsibilities is to document Queensland's history. One of the guiding principles of the

Libraries Act 1988 (Qld) is 'content relevant to Queensland should be collected, preserved, promoted and made accessible'¹⁸. To fulfill this responsibility, a public appeal for ephemeral material – flyers, posters, signs, mail-outs – was made. This material will provide insight for future generations into community responses and the social and economic impact of the coronavirus on Queensland.

By working with photographers and film makers across Queensland, Covid-19 is being documented by recording scenes of social distancing and isolation and capturing many aspects of life under the threat of coronavirus, including retail closures, empty public spaces and supermarket shelves, and repurposed factories. Filmed interviews are also capturing the stories and experiences of essential health care workers, patients, students and educators, business owners and workers, and others affected by the spread of the virus.

After six months, there is speculation (and some uncertainty) as to what the 'new normal' will represent. The pivot to digital has been extraordinarily successful, with the website achieving its highest ever engagement. Compared with the previous year, there was a fifty per cent increase in online visitation between April – June 2020. There is also evidence that online programs continue to be accessed, extending their reach and return on investment.



In the workplace, one of the most prevalent outcomes of Covid-19 worldwide has been the adoption of remote working; and the State Library workforce's reaction is no exception. For many staff it was their first experience at working remotely and they have embraced it. Team leaders are proud of the way their teams responded to challenges of working remotely, and teams are equally proud that they have been trusted to work remotely. Both groups are seeking a continuation of flexible work arrangements. Over the coming months, the executive team is keen to work with staff to shape a 'new normal' which will include agreement for a long-term plan for how remote working will be supported. It is envisaged it will offer the flexibility sought and involve a mix of onsite and remote working.

Survey of Public Libraries

In September 2020, a survey of public libraries sought their observations for the period of closure of the libraries from March 2020 on. Sixty responses were received which represent 81% of councils with current service level agreements with State Library.

Key findings of the survey of public libraries were:

- 28% of councils implemented a new home delivery service and 38% expanded their existing service.

Staff were very conscious of the health and wellbeing of vulnerable clients and where possible provided contactless deliveries. Several library services made welfare check phone calls to home library clients and other vulnerable members of the community. Some services worked with community partners to deliver items.

- 63% of councils introduced a click and collect or outdoor pick-up service.
- 47% of councils introduced staff- selected or themed reading packages.

These services were known by many names including grab and go, grab and loan, takeaway library, and chef's selections. Some libraries applied the same level of curation to their digital collections. Some RLQ libraries ran out of books to satisfy their customers as exchanges and inter library loans were suspended.

- 50% of libraries provided First 5 Forever deliveries of book packs. First 5 Forever is a family literacy program delivered by



City Square Public Library, Brisbane Queensland.

public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs) with the primary aim of providing strong early literacy foundations for all Queensland children aged 0-5 years.

- 65% of libraries introduced First 5 Forever online or virtual programming (0-5s).

The First 5 Forever program delivery has been focussed on activities onsite at libraries. With this not possible, many libraries commenced online programming. There is interest in being able to offer online story times after the pandemic.

- 37% of councils introduced new outreach services.

Some outreach services were established after approaches from other organisations. Several Indigenous Knowledge Centres partnered with Education Queensland to provide access to study space and connectivity for boarding school students learning from home.

- 48% of library services implemented online memberships.
- 40% of library services provided additional online member services.

While not a new service for some libraries, they promoted online membership heavily. Some libraries found there was not a great demand, but others had hundreds of new members.

- 40% of library services implemented telephone or online reference services.
- A further 43% expanded existing services.

In some cases, technology assisted with the direction of calls and some calls were managed by staff working from home. Library staff were also deployed to council telephone information services to assist the community. Many of the enquiries were phone calls and emails requiring support access to e-content and digital platforms.

- 47% of library services implemented new electronic or digital resources.
- 60% expanded existing services.

Many libraries increased the range of electronic resources available and some remarkable increases in usage were recorded. Many libraries redesigned their websites to highlight e-resources and social media was a popular strategy to promote these collections. Remote access to [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) provided through State Library



Screenshot of State Library's online Talking Ideas event with former Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard and ABC TV presenter Jessica van Vonderen.

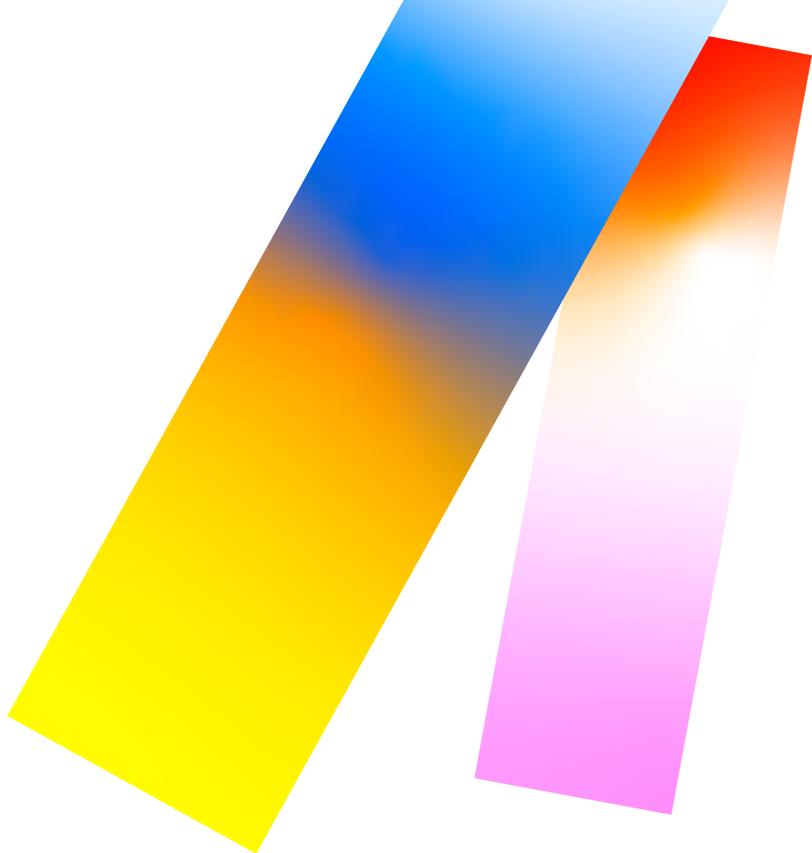
was a particularly popular resource. New products were added to library offerings. Use of digital resources increased significantly. Clients have learned how to access e-resources. Loan periods were shortened for e-resources at some libraries, allowing them to circulate more quickly. Budgets for additional e-resources were tight particularly in the last quarter of the financial year.

- 57% of library services implemented online or virtual programming including livestreams, podcasts, pre-recorded programs, virtual book clubs the reach and engagement libraries have achieved during the pandemic with their online programming is significant.

Many libraries programmed for online audiences across a range of ages. Facebook was the most common platform

for distributing pre-recorded early literacy programs. Zoom was also used by several libraries. Online programming decreased once physical branches began to reopen.

- 58% of councils had some library staff redeployed to other areas of council. Library staff were involved in many different areas of council, illustrating the flexibility of the workforce and their transferrable skills.
- 25% of libraries established new partnerships for alternative service delivery. Some new partnerships were essential for delivering materials in some communities, including the post office and community-based organisations. Libraries also interacted with emergency management teams, local radio and in one case the local zoo.



Beyond 2020: the 'New Normal'

With Queensland now in Stage 4 of the Roadmap to easing Covid-19, it is acknowledged that the state is well positioned for recovery. There is increase optimism by the community and consequently increased usage of libraries onsite.

This contribution has provided an overview of how the Queensland public library network has responded to the pandemic. Public libraries and IKCs responded to the Covid-19 restrictions with creativity and resilience, expanding virtual programming, online membership applications, digital collections and information services through phone and email to support their communities and home deliveries

of materials. Similarly, the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted the service model of the State Library of Queensland. Whilst working remotely, staff demonstrated great resilience and at the same time developed innovative solutions to enable rich access to collections and services. Consequently, there are enhanced opportunities for Queenslanders to engage and share their experiences. Looking beyond 2020 – one thing is certain – the success of initiatives introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic will influence future service planning and delivery.

Advice and contributions by Anna Raunik, Louise Denoon, Jennifer Freeman and Mylee Joseph is acknowledged. This contribution expands on a paper submitted to Alexandria: the journal of national and international library and information issues, which is published by Sage.

Conclusion

by Diederick Slijkerman

Before I draw conclusions on what is in this book, I would like to tell you how I embarked on my journey through libraries. My experiences were diverse and rich – as a child, as a student, as a father, as a scholar – but lacked the broader perspective of what is happening in the library world. This is the story of my journey.

A children's story reads: 'Anna and dad go to the library every week. There, they select five books and bring them back after a week [...] Daddy starts to tell [...] Anna listens with a big smile on her face. Reading booklets makes such fun!'¹ When my three-year-old son and I visit the library, he proudly selects his books. We read the books together and have fun with the family. For reading can be fun, and so much more. Reading is in many ways one of the basic needs to live happily, as it can be done for pleasure, for leisure or for work. Moreover, reading helps to share norms and values. It can provide you facts, ideas, and views. Literature can also contain ideals, emotion or calls for action.

In my childhood, the public library was a place to get answers to fundamental questions and to try to understand the wider world. I was intrigued by words such as 'politics' and 'strategic' and concepts like 'development aid', because why should there be people in needy circumstances? How could this arise, and how could it be solved? I could read books

about other continents and information folders with general knowledge, and borrow books and international magazines. I had the impression that I could search for value-free and detached information. You came to the public library only to borrow books, it was a quiet place and you were not allowed to make much noise, there was not much room for sitting and all books were shelved together. It often was a puzzle to find the right kind of books.

At my secondary school I discovered a book about how to play bridge. It happened that my friends and I started to play bridge in the library. We had lively discussions about rules and strategies, sitting at round tables with comfortable bucket seats. The head of the library did not like noise, because libraries were a quiet place, but he really appreciated our curiosity and ability to learn. Finally, he invited us to share his boat to learn sailing. The library connected us by sharing interests at a central place.

Librarians sometimes get tired of all these warm childhood memories of libraries, but they should embrace the many compliments they receive. There is no other institution which receives such widespread community respect!

Nowadays, besides going to the public library, we have the option to search for information on the internet. On the internet

everyone can share information. However, when I need detailed information about a topic, I go to a library. I used to go to academic libraries, but in the Netherlands, they changed their own search engine into WorldCat, a worldwide search engine, and set aside their shared search engine Picarta. When you are not a student or university staff member, it is not possible to get a copy of a journal nor to borrow a book from other university collections, so in this respect academic libraries moved into a more restricted collection. Public libraries however moved to be more open, as they share a national search engine, so that citizens can borrow books from every public library in the country; to be collected at the library you are subscribed to.

When visiting a public library, I see a lot more activity than lending books, especially in the cities where all kinds of performances, educational activities and visual arts are undertaken. In the Netherlands, every public library has special projects for children, the elderly and disabled groups. Moreover, libraries are connected to the world through international newspapers, magazines and computers with internet.

I have also a private library, but it is impossible to collect all interesting books yourself, and conversely, it is far more useful to share books with other people.



My private library, the shelves made by my father Jos Slijkerman with Alerce, the wood of Fitzroya, a conifer in the Andes mountains in Chile and Argentina.

From this experience I started reading all the contributions in this book and tried to get my head around them to be able to describe what I saw.

Gateway to Our Society

With the arrival of the digital age and the reign of internet, libraries seem superfluous. Libraries are collections of books, but on the internet much more information is available. One still tends to identify a library with bookshelves and a lot of books, but as the contributions show, public libraries offer a lot more. Already in ancient times a library was

- 2 **Umberto Eco**, *The Name of the Rose* (London 2010).
3 **Pieter 't Hart**, *Een machtig middel tot volksverheffing* (Utrecht 1992).

- 4 **Lucy Cousins**, *Maisy goes to the Library* (Amsterdam/London 2010, 2nd print) from 3 years.

also a place to meet each other and to discuss politics, society, science, and, of course, books. The famous first library in the world, the library of Alexandria, contained a lot of spaces for these purposes. With the beginning of the Renaissance, the library became a place of providing information to the people. In *The Name of the Rose*, it is argued that secrecy leads to ignorance and superstition, and that books should be accessible to spread knowledge and rationality.² The book published on the 100th anniversary of the public library of Utrecht demonstrates this in its title: 'A mighty means to elevate the people'.³

Also, in these days, libraries help to combat ignorance and superstition, which can prevail on the internet and other social media.

The Library as House of the Community

Libraries have become more a part of the world, as they turned into pleasant places, with different chairs, benches, sofa's, cheerful carpets, and books displayed attractively calling to you 'please, read me'. For every citizen, a library offers a place to connect with each other, to connect with the world outside the village or city, and to

exchange knowledge. So in a book for children one reads: 'so much is to be done in the library... computing... listening to music... making a copy of your most beautiful drawing... watching the fish in the aquarium... Mouse looks next to the aquarium... and there she finds a book about fish... and it is splashing!'⁴

As the contributions show, public libraries today function as a rallying point for the community; it is a third place, next to people's home and workplace. Many interesting examples show us the social-cultural function of libraries. In Nepal, during the earthquake of 2015 libraries started to function as a point of aid. In Philadelphia in the US, the library addresses illiteracy and unhealthy habits by providing cooking lessons to people enabling them to read recipes and improve their lives by regularly eating healthy food. Libraries are inventing all kinds of activity to assist people in different circumstances and phases of life. For example, the Utrecht library in the Netherlands has all kinds of projects to get children, especially of less privileged groups, interested in reading, because it (partly) determines their further role in society. Also, all kinds of activities are organised for elderly people to learn new skills, such as computing, and to stay in contact with their surroundings. People in their mid-lives are assisted if they become unemployed, by sharing their experiences in self-help groups or teaching them how to write an effective application letter.

- 5 **R. David Lankes**, *Expect More. Demanding Better Libraries for Today's Complex World* (Lexington, KY 2012) back cover.



The Oog in Al neighborhood library in Utrecht is housed with a cafe in a former oil and line biscuit factory.

As a contributor and librarian David Lankes argues: 'communities need libraries that go beyond bricks and mortar, and beyond books and literature. We need to expect more out of our libraries. They should be places of learning and advocates for our communities in terms of privacy, intellectual property, and economic development'.⁵

Secondly, public libraries are centres of personal development. They do not only stimulate social interaction by bringing people together, but as we have seen they also promote equal access, participation, and education. As libraries are sharing information, they must promote transparency. Through public libraries, knowledge has become more accessible and

democratic. Democracy presupposes openness of information to protect people from biased information and fake news. Without freedom of information no good insight is possible, nor a balanced public debate about policy and measures. Without transparency there will be no support for political decision-making, nor the best possible solution will be reached. Libraries also make it possible for individuals to improve themselves by learning and experimenting in participation and debate. Alberto Manguel argues that literature is not giving solutions but deals with interesting dilemmas. In times of crisis and chaos, when we feel ourselves out of control, we seek comfort in the written word by which we get a grip on the world again.⁶

Four Trends

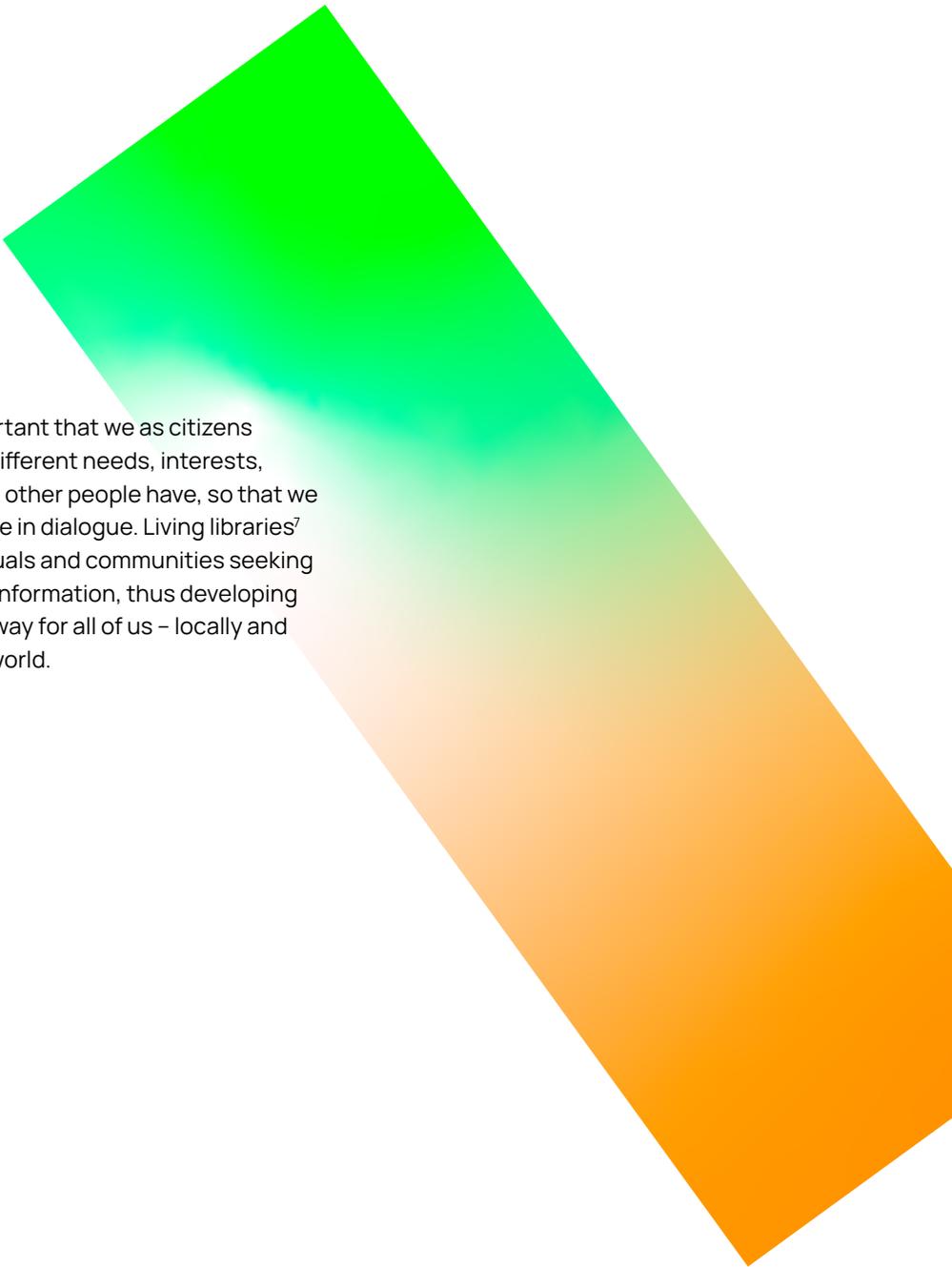
Reading all those impressive contributions from authors all over the world, I am wondering what possible trends would be for libraries in future. I see four of these.

The first one is that libraries could play an even more important role in organizing information and knowledge about climate change and sustainable development goals, and support their communities in this major global challenge. As demonstrated, during the Covid-19 crisis libraries can react in a flexible way to these challenges not only in their onsite services but also digital and online.

Secondly, libraries could develop even more as centres of debate and exchange of thought and help to confront people with views outside their normal circle. Thus, libraries contribute to inclusion in a democratic society, addressing division, as we can see in the elections in the USA, the rise of populist movements and for example the black lives matter movement and the reactions to these.

Thirdly, the impact on society of technological developments is immense. It is about power of Big Tech, people being controlled by algorithms, privacy, robotization, Artificial Intelligence, fake news, and ethics. To maintain an inclusive democratic society at a human level, libraries will have to continue to inform, provide context, and guide citizens to enable them to stay in control over their lives, relations and society.

Fourth, a library nowadays needs an innovative and enterprising director who also can rely on a network of expertise and collaboration, such as Ton van Vlimmeren who forged new paths by thinking out of the box. In the contributions you can perceive that these properties are perhaps the most important for the library field in the future. A librarian then has to be cognisant of broad fields of knowledge, be familiar with all kinds of social media, be aware of new trends in reading, learning and education, have a great political antenna and diplomatic skills, and be an outstanding communicator.



It is important that we as citizens understand the different needs, interests, habits and values other people have, so that we are able to engage in dialogue. Living libraries⁷ are about individuals and communities seeking and acting upon information, thus developing further as a gateway for all of us – locally and globally – to the world.

Bio Ton van Vlimmeren

Ton van Vlimmeren (1954) was the last 10 years director of the Public Library of Utrecht, Netherlands of which he retired December 2020. He held the same position before, between 1995 and 2005. He worked as a psychologist, teacher, educational consultant, project manager for 'Educational Priority Areas' and as director of Public Education in Utrecht.

He acted for the City of Utrecht as director of Real Estate and Development, of Districts and Civic Centers and of Public Services. He was vice-president of the Dutch Library Association and member of the Governmental Steering Committee for restructuring of the libraries. He was president of the board of NBD Biblion, the media supplier for libraries in the Netherlands.

He contributed to the International Libraries Network of the Bertelsmann Foundation, was an advisor in the Global Libraries Program of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and contributed to the International Network of Emerging Library Innovator of the same foundation.

Also, he is a founding father of Public Libraries 2030 in Brussels and was a member of the Metropolitan Libraries Section of the International Federation of Library Associations.

He is board member of the Pica Foundation, that supports innovation in libraries. He has published on library topics and is a frequent speaker on conferences. Currently, he is president of the European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation Associations.



Ton van Vlimmeren, Photo: Marijelein Spronk.

Bio Diederick Slijkerman

Diederick Slijkerman is a member of the supervisory board of the Utrecht Public Library and is author of several books and many articles in magazines and newspapers. He is a historian, lawyer and theologian.

Diederick specialized in cultural and political history. He wrote a biography about Henk Vonhoff, the famous mayor of Utrecht 1974-1980. In 2010 Diederick was chief editor of the book *Evaluating Medicines* in which the context of the regulation of medical products in Europe is explained.

Besides these activities, Diederick is responsible for Integrity, Risk Management and Compliance at ProRail, the national railways, and before that he was in charge of the international policy department of the Medicines Evaluation Board. Diederick is also a member of the Society of Dutch Literature (De Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde).



Diederick Slijkerman. Photo: Marco Bakker.

On the retirement of Ton van Vlimmeren as director of the Utrecht Public Library in the Netherlands the idea was born to 'harvest' the knowledge and experience of his extensive international network in the library world.

Colleagues from all continents volunteered to contribute on the 'state of the art' in the world of public libraries. It has become a rich anthology, a bouquet of flowers different in origin, smell, colour, and appearance. All address the role of libraries in the different communities and the value they add for the citizens as well as the challenges these libraries have. More than that, they also all illustrate the development of the public library from house of books to house of the community. A invaluable third place for enriching the lives of people, to support knowledge and democracy and a laboratory to work on a sustainable world.

A 'must read' for everyone wondering how such a century-old institution managed to stay vital and be relevant in our society.

