IFLA Public Libraries Satellite

IFLA Public Libraries Satellite:
Public library futures in a global digital world

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Library of Birmingham, UK

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Keynote: Transforming public libraries in the knowledge society

Jens Thorhauge, Independent Senior Adviser and Consultant, Denmark

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Transforming Public Libraries in the Knowledge Society

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Knowledge society means…

- Globalisation
- Harder competition
- Digitisation
- Cultural changes, fluid modernity, new media-landscape, social media
- Growing fragmentation and gaps
- Need for new competencies

Use of media change…

- Learning, researching, studying find new forms based on digital culture
- Printed papers and analogue media loose markets,
- advertising moves from print to the web
- Younger generations change reading habits completely
- Google is 15 years old, facebook 10, twitter 8, the first iPhone in 2007. **They are all fast movers…**

The traditional public library has been challenged for 20 years

- The use of books is declining and the role of the print is reduced
- The library monopoly of 'giving access' to any published work has lost its importance.
- In many countries libraries are met with cuts, closure, given to volunters

How did libraries change so far?

- Books remain the core business in public libraries, and probably will remain there for many years, but – as a general rule – constantly shrinking, while other services may grow.
- Web-services and e-media the main field of change. Cultural and learning programmes too
- But public libraries have diffulties in competing with commercial streaming services, maybe we shuould not?

Main trends in new services

- More active learning and social activities, media literacy activities, workshops, meetingplace, daily living info

- ALA publication* suggests four scenarios: The status quo library, the 'electronic' library, the 'happening place library', 'the community living room'- in practice most libraries search a mix.

*P.Hernon (ed):Reflecting on the future of Academic and Public Libraries (2013)

Access to information

- Is still relevant – in the analogue and virtual space
- But information is mainly on the worldwide web
- Commercial content online services intrude the library
- And the public library plays a minor role in ordinary peoples daily dealing with 'information'.

The world's knowledge no longer fits neatly on library shelves*

- Endless numbers of articles and books have been dealing with the transformation of libraries and how to cope with new conditions

- My main conclusion from desk research is that there is not a clear and convincing common idea of what the mission of the new library is, and that may be because the situation does not call for standard solutions

* Frederic Stielow:Reinventing the library for online education, (ALA 2014)

Why is it so difficult to change?

- The traditional paradigme works for old users
- There are customers, new books and other media that are requested…
- But you might argue that the quite permanent trend to decreasing is alarming and calls for action!

My assertion: libraries missed radical change of the organisation

- The traditional public library concept was so strong because it fitted so well to the world's knowledge and was de facto an international standard concept.

- Everybody recognises that conditions call for a new concept, but at least we do not have a common solution to replace the traditional organisation…

Can you imagine …

- a library without books or any other media?
- What if the majority subscribe on streaming services and don't need a library collection?
- Would you close the library or try to develop a new business model?
- The point is, that if you say: YES, you must do it yourself, you may get inspiration from other institutions, but there is no universal solution

Still my point is:

We need more new **services**

we need to build another kind of **institution**

we need to establish new forms of **relationship**,

we need new **competencies**

The Danish Modelprogramme for Public Libraries

- Is developed as a tool and inspiration to transform public libraries and seems to work in Denmark, maybe in other countries as well?

- Acts on the digital revolution and the much more differentiated user needs

- Sees the library mission as supporting empowerment of citizens, social innovation, personal experience and involvement

Builds on a 4-space model, with traditional and new library activities in all of them, BUT MUCH MORE.
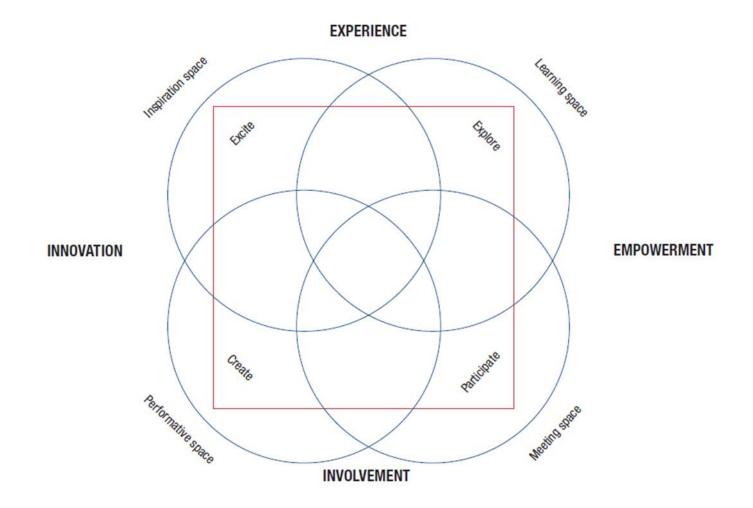
Danish 4-space public library model

The 4-space library implies a change in the role of the 'librarian'

- Search machines have taken over the role of the librarian as 'pathfinder in the information jungle'

- The collection becomes more of current interest, the 'human record collection' a national library task

- The librarian becomes a facilitator and inspirator for using media, organising makerspaces, clubs, workshops, creates exhibitions and recommendations, gives booktalks and displays the daily collection offer and space in the library

Promoting a new type af general education ('Bildung')

- It inspires to the use of media, exhibitions, gatherings, events, browsing

- It is supporting empowerment and enlightenment in everyday life fields

- It is a learning space supporting media literacy and general education

- It is actively supporting citizenship

- It gives space to user driven activities and includes users in interactive ways

- It is a meeting place encouraging social interaction, casual seating, food/drink

The learning space

- Programmes for learning activites
- E-learning offers
- Informal learning, help to self-help
- Workshops, instruction and consultations run by volunteers
- Media-literacy

Different library learning spaces

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Design for different needs

You might invite teens to their own space designed for informal learning?

Design services aiming at specific needs, that users recognize

Inspiration space

- Design of inviting and inspiring spaces

- Stages and spots for events and various activities

- Inspiring display of media

Inspiration

Simple daily performances in the library space,

Find inspiring ways to display digital media in the library space

- Display web ressources in the library space, in the public space, on the web

- Despite copyright: enormous free learning ressources on the web, that might be presented in a tangible way

Inspiring presentation of media- still a lot can be done

The Meeting Space

- The informal, un-planned meetings
- Organised debates, events, cultural activities
- Space for playing, workshops, citizen-organised meetings

- A good café is a must

Design furniture and space to further and invite to meetings

The library square inspires to meetings

Variety of settings for variety of meetings

Test the good meeting spots in the way citizens use them

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Performative space

- Creative and practical activities – organised or individual

- Workshops, gear, facilities,

- Programmes, masterclasses

- Exhibition and display of results and products

Performance and creativity:
offer space, equipment, assistance

4-space model is a new **concept**

- Not just a design manual!
- It involves new services that requires new competencies – action learning, new staff?
- Partnerships and active involvement of volunteers and citizens
- To implement the model you need to organize with teams and projects, and 'unboss' the traditional organisation and rely on the creativity of the staff and….

Trust the users to give long opening hours and selfserved libraries and new relations

Åbent alle dage
kl. 06.00-24.00

Good luck – enjoy the work

Want to continue the discussion…?

You may contact

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http://modelprogrammer.kulturstyrelsen.dk/en/