



Something  
for Everyone:

*Public  
Libraries  
and the  
Information  
Society*

14 - 15 October 1999 in Copenhagen

**Contributions & Debate**

*from the Pan-European Conference  
initiated by PubliCA*

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# Preface

**Rolf Hapel**  
**Library Director**  
**Aarhus Municipal Libraries**  
**On behalf of the planning committee**



The first Pan-European conference on the role of public libraries in the information society was held in Copenhagen the 14th and 15th October 1999 under the title "Something for Everyone - Public Libraries and the Information Society".

The conference was an "invitation-only" event which attracted more than 100 top decision-makers from 31 European countries. Among the speakers were the Danish Minister of Culture Mrs. Elsebeth Gerner Nielsen; the Finish Member of Parliament Mrs. Mirja Ryynänen, who, as a member of the European Parliament's Committee on Culture, wrote an own-initiative report on the role of the public libraries in the information society; IFLA's Secretary General Mr. Ross Shimmon; Mr. Bernard Smith, the Head of DG XIII's office for Cultural Heritage Applications, and a number of other prominent people from the European library sector.

The purpose of the conference was to attract attention to the possibilities in European library policy. The role of the public libraries in the emerging information society in relation to democracy, economic development, lifelong learning and cultural diversity was on the agenda. Based on the fact that Europe's more than 40,000 public libraries, together with the development of virtual networks, form a strategic potential for a marked improvement of the citizens' quality of life and democratic opportunities by providing free and equal access to information of a high quality.

The conference naturally resulted in the exchange of knowledge and a foundation of networks among the participants, but a further result was a policy-statement, "The Copenhagen Declaration", which was endorsed by the participants. With that a policy-document, which could influence the development in the library sector in Europe, is now available.

Even at this early point in time the conference has had a very concrete impact on national library grants and policies in for instance Romania.

The conference was organised by "PubliCA" - EU's concerted action initiative on public libraries.



# The Copenhagen Declaration

On 14th and 15th October 1999 senior politicians and policy makers from 31 European countries met to consider the vital role of public libraries within the emerging Information Societies. Those attending the meeting heard about the key roles already played by many European public libraries in encouraging community identity, economic development, lifelong learning and cultural diversity. At the end of the meeting those present agreed the following declaration as a statement of intent for the future of public libraries across the continent of Europe.

In support of the

- UNESCO Public Library Manifesto
- IFLA Guidelines on Public Libraries
- Report on the Role of Libraries in the Modern World of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media of the European Parliament
- European Commission's study – Public Libraries and the Information Society
- Council of Europe Cultural Committee report: Library Legislation and Policy in Europe
- IFLA statement on Freedom of Expression

We declare the following as a common basis for national and European policies regarding public libraries:

## ROLES FOR THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

We support the following roles for public libraries, highlighted in the Leuven Communiqué:\*)

### DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP

– Public libraries have a strategic opportunity to increase quality of life and democratic possibilities for citizens of the Information Societies by providing free and equal access to high-quality information.

### ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

– Public libraries support the growth of communities through the provision of information services designed to meet local needs. They are important tools

for reducing disparity between the information rich and the information poor citizens of Europe.

### LIFELONG LEARNING

– Public libraries provide, through their wide-spread distribution across Europe, a cost-effective infrastructure for lifelong learning and easy access to the content of the virtual networks. They also support students at all levels of formal education.

### CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

– Public libraries are cultural institutions in accordance with the cultural dimension of the EU-Treaty with a great responsibility for cultural heritage, literature and literacy.

### ACTION BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

We call on the European Commission to support the European Parliament initiative 'The Role of Libraries in the Modern World' by promoting practical actions to implement the recommendations of the report. These actions should stress the key role of public libraries in the emerging Information Society and the need for a European level information policy.

### ACTION BY NATIONAL AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS

We call on all national and federal governments to take the following actions:

- 1) Prepare a national information policy for the development and co-ordination of all relevant resources, in the public interest. This policy framework will recognise the vital and unique role of public libraries as access points for the majority of citizens and be supported by suitable library legislation.
- 2) Create suitable networking infrastructure to support the development of a national information policy in the Information Age. The network infrastructure should draw together all information creating agencies,

especially the traditional memory institutions (libraries, museums and archives), to encourage information sharing and the creation of joint resources. The infrastructure should also encourage practical co-operation between public libraries.

- 3) Implement a development programme for public libraries that ensure minimum standards of access to every citizen including appropriate information and communication technologies and suitable levels of investment to meet those standards. This programme should reflect the need for there to be control of developments at the level of the local community through the relevant municipality or other organisation.
- 4) Ensure that public libraries are equipped to provide maximum access to the new information resources for all citizens regardless of financial, physical or educational abilities and that those libraries have adequate resources to sustain the services over time.
- 5) Lobby the European Parliament to place public libraries high on the social agenda now and in the future.
- 6) Work to ensure that there is an equitable balance between the rights of the creators of information and the rights of citizens' access to the information that will help them to lead better lives.

### ACTION BY PUBLIC LIBRARIES

- 1) Be prepared to re-assess roles and resources and re-design services to respond to changing social needs.
- 2) Work towards long-term co-operation and partnership with other memory institutions and those involved with community education.
- 3) Ensure that citizens are aware of and feel able to exploit fully all the resources of the public library network by effective marketing of services to all sectors of the community.

\*) The outcome of a seminar attended by public library managers from 23 countries organised by PubliCA the Concerted Action for Public Libraries in Leuven (BE) on 22 August 1998 ([www.publi-ca-europe.net](http://www.publi-ca-europe.net))



## Conference Programme

### 14th of October 1999

**Introduction to the conference** by PubliCA

**Public Libraries and the Information Society**  
The Danish Minister of Culture, Mrs. Elsebeth Gerner Nielsen

Keynote:

**The Position of Public Libraries  
in Relation to the Information Society**  
Mrs. Mirja Rynänen, MP, Parliament of Finland

**The Public Libraries and their role in terms  
of Social Inclusion, Lifelong Learning,  
Cultural Policy and Economic Growth**  
By the General Director of IFLA, Mr. Ross Shimmon

**Public Libraries and Regional Development**  
speaker Mr. Ioannis Koukiadis, MEP, Professor of Law,  
University of Thessaloniki & Ioannis Trohopoulos, Director,  
Public Library of Veria, Greece

The President of EBLIDA Mrs. Britt-Marie Häggström  
introduces **session on National Strategies**

**The Irish Strategy**  
by Mr. Tom O'Mahony, Assistant Secretary,  
Department of the Environment and Local Government

**The Portuguese Strategy**  
by Mr. José Carreira Marques, the Mayor of Beja Municipality

### 15th of October 1999

**Special session: Perspectives for the public libraries  
in regard to the ongoing developments in the  
IST programme and RTD activities in DG XIII/E**  
by Mr Bernard Smith, Head of Unit,  
DG XIII/E2, Cultural Heritage Applications

**Session on interaction between Society  
and Public Libraries by PubliCA**  
Four short presentations

**Democracy and Citizenship**  
- Mrs. Breda Karun, Deputy Director,  
Library Otona Zupancica, Ljubljana

**Economic and Social Development**  
- Mrs. Heather Kirby, Information Services Manager,  
Croydon Libraries

**Lifelong Learning**  
- Mr. Franz Meijer, Director, Public Library Rotterdam

**Culture and Linguistic Diversity**  
- Mrs. Tuula Haavisto, Project Manager CECUP  
(Central and Eastern European Copyright User Platform)

**Questions and Debate**

**Three 5 minute summaries of the conference by**  
Director Jens Thorhauge,  
the Danish National Library Authority, Denmark.  
Victoriano Colodron,  
Technical Adviser, Ministry of Education and Culture, Spain.  
Audrone Glosiene, Head of Department of Library Science,  
Faculty of Communication, Vilnius University, Lithuania.

**Presentation of Declaration** by PubliCA





# Public Libraries and the Information Society

**The Danish Minister of Culture,  
Mrs. Elsebeth Gerner Nielsen**

Thank you very much for this unique opportunity to speak on a subject which has very high priority in my political work, and for the chance to do so to an audience representing so many European countries that agree on the importance of developing public libraries to a new standard.

It is a special pleasure for me to welcome PubliCA and all conference participants to Denmark as we are very proud of our libraries – not only the newly opened Black Diamond at the Royal Library which you will visit later on, but also the many extremely good public libraries throughout the country. I hope you will get the chance to visit some of them as well.

The Public libraries have participated in the development of the democratic welfare state. One could say that without free and equal access to information and the freedom of expression, we might have a state and a society, but it would not be the people's state and society. In that sense the public libraries have played and play a unique and central role in the European history: The public libraries show the true face of the state. Their existence is the expression of article nineteen in United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights – the expression of the people's right "...to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Today we focus on libraries because it becomes more and more obvious that knowledge is the crucial competitive factor in the Information Society. The World Bank recently stated that knowledge is the single most important factor in developing and maintaining a democratic welfare state.

In the Information Society a far greater knowledge potential is accessible than ever before – the role of the library is to make use of this growing potential. The way in which we deal with information and IT changes is already affecting our jobs and daily lives in nearly every

aspect. We see new industries, new markets, new jobs, new cultural trends popping up all the time.

In the library field the perspective is, that via networks more people may get access to larger amounts of information in a faster and easier way. An important point is that the user gets access to the same amount of material whether she is a user of a public library in Jutland or a user of British Library. This represents an immense potential for growth and wealth.

I think we all agree on this, and it is my impression that policy development in the field of libraries has been moving very fast in Europe in recent years.

In this context I want to make one remark: Denmark is aware that the proposal for a directive on copyright in the Information Society can be a curb on the development. From a Danish point of view the proposal does not represent a good balance between the copyright-owner and the consideration for the access to information. During the negotiations on the proposal we have stated the point that the conditions of libraries should be as good as possible in order to secure their role in the Information Society.

Disregarding the proposal we are in Denmark quite close to attaining the vision of the new public library by making a new common standard using the term "the extended library":

We are running a major project called Denmark's Electronic Research Library which will make digital research resources available from any connected computer.

And – which is probably of major interest to this audience – I am going to introduce a new Act on libraries in the Danish Parliament next month.

The proposal for a new act is the result of a recommendation in the Danish government paper on the information society set up as early as 1994 – and it contains some very important basic principles, which I would like to outline in brief.

• • • • •

*The first principle* is that we regard the library sector as a whole. It is my belief that the large research and university libraries must co-operate with the public libraries on interlibrary loans. Library materials should be within reach for every citizen, disregarding the access point to the library system.

We have a unique tool - the DanBib database - with registration of holdings in all the larger and medium-sized research and public libraries. It is my intention to give Internet-based access to this database and to develop not only search but also ordering facilities to the entire holdings.

*The second principle* is what we call the extended library. The act will make it obligatory for all public libraries to give access to not only printed material, but also CDs, multimedia, and the Internet. In this context I would like to say that it is very important to me that the new media should not lead to a weaker position for the books.

*The third principle* is that the access to and use of materials - at the library or by lending - is free of charge. In my opinion the public library shall be an open house without payment - simply because it's good for all of us and the society as a whole that citizens have free access to information and experiences.

*The fourth principle* is related to an extended possibility for libraries to charge users for special services. We have a very good reason for that - well two actually. One is in order to create a better economic situation for the public libraries. But a far more important reason is that with the new technology the possibilities for offering a better service to those, who are willing to pay, are much improved.

*The fifth principle* is that the county libraries will be entrusted with the responsibility for skills development and consultancy in their service areas. The Ministry of Culture will sign performance contracts with the county libraries, defining the tasks with due regard to local needs.

*The sixth principle* is related to the need



for more co-operation between the public libraries. The new Library Act will implement various economic instruments in the library sector in order to create more co-ordination and co-operation between the libraries.

I believe that these principles will ensure the standard for the extended library in a few years time.

I am convinced that we so far have only seen the beginning. We observe the development of new professional roles, and we are spending a lot of effort on the new technological possibilities that are given to us.

But in this audience I would also like to stress the very strong cultural challenge the public libraries have to deal with. The cultural role of the public library has always in practice been not only to give access to information but actively to inspire the users to transform information into genuine knowledge and a personal sense of affinity and identity - to give the users tools to improve their lives.

This task is more important than ever. The public library is sharing it with many other cultural and social institutions, and my point is that a much closer co-operation between different institutions and organisations is needed. As has been stated often and in very different circumstances our values and conceptions of family, work, leisure and culture are changing rapidly, and we need to relate to some stable values we can share with one another.

There is no simple answer as to what these values should be, but they must lead to a feeling of belonging - an affinity. Many Danes have at least this: we share a history, be it national or local - or more correct: a common understanding of our history, the feeling of belonging to a specific geographical place, a city, a land-

scape. The challenge is to nourish values in the global village. As citizens in a multicultural world we need to learn to navigate in the chaos of images and interpretations belonging to radically different cultures - and we can only do that on the basis of a solid identity, which at the same time must be very flexible.

We have to devote our attention to this field - we have to work on the idea of the library as a genuine cultural meeting place for everyone: Parents, children, students, immigrants, teenagers and senior citizens.

Behind all these challenges there is a common objective and desire to strengthen democracy in the sense of citizen participation and political debate as the foundation for social, political and economic development. Here we need libraries as the active meeting place and to provide extended free access to information and librarians, to support the dialogue and the free use of information.

In a European context we are doing something already. Libraries have always had a broad international orientation, and I am convinced that there will be a growing technological co-operation between the European countries in the future - rising from sheer necessity.

But I want to stress that there is immense need for new ways of playing a proactive role in promoting cultural values and strengthening democracy. I think that libraries have a unique role to play in this field. They are trusted by people and no other cultural institutions have so many users. They link culture, education including lifelong learning and public information. They can - soon - be reached at any time from any connected computer.

I am convinced that the libraries have a potential for impact far beyond our present imagination - go for it!



# Position of Public Libraries in Relation to the Information Society

**Mirja Ryyänen,  
MP, the Finnish Parliament**



The information society development demands to redefine the position and objectives of all the institutions which work with information, knowledge, and culture. Of these, media and education have been discussed in the European Union actively. Libraries have been a marginal theme.

The situation is changing. Libraries have been identified as one of the key elements for open access to information, which is crucial to the development of a democratic information society. In October 1998 the European Parliament adopted an own-initiative report "The Role of Libraries in Modern Societies", the first library policy paper in the EU. It defines the need for the most important Pan-European actions in the library field.

First, the general development of the information society is pushing to re-evaluation of all the institutions which work with information, data, and knowledge – and indirectly also with culture. In this connection the roles of education and media have been discussed widely already, also in the European Union. But libraries – as well as other memory institutions like archives and museums – have not been considered. Still, there is a clear need in the information society to maintain an institution which is concentrating on collecting and organising information and offering general access to it. Until now, this work has been underestimated, but I argue that the situation will change!

Libraries are especially important now when the whole idea of education is stressing more and more independent learning and acting. All citizens must be able to find and use information. It is the key raw material – but it is a zero resource if there are no access points to it and if documents are in a chaotic order.

Here we can see libraries enter the stage: *"The unique function of libraries is to acquire, organise, offer for use and preserve publicly available material irrespective of the form in which it is packaged (print, cassette, CD-ROM, network form) in such a way that, when it is needed, it can be found and put to use. No other institution carries out this long-term, systematic work."* \*

Culture must be nominated especially: it has an important and unique role in mobilising resources of human beings. It has been described: *"To some extent, culture makes its influence felt more indirectly than knowledge, but it is impossible to imagine how people's creative powers could be fully activated without the impact of culture, which extends into the depths of the mind."* \*

The challenge to modern societies is that the basic resource, knowledge, is developing from information in very individual, capricious and unpredictable processes. It cannot be commanded. Still, societies can support this development, e.g. by offering access to cultural and knowledge treasures.

This can even be translated into economical language: to make the most of the human resources in Europe, this resource must be fed rich and various cultural and information contents!

I would like to stress especially the idea of organising information by libraries. It is often overshadowed by the second important side of library work: offering access. But in the context of lifelong learning and new technology all forms of organising documents are getting more into focus. This is clear to anybody who has tried to find something at rarely used Internet web sites.

## **New lines in the EU - and in the United States**

In accordance with this phenomenon there are new political lines in the European Union:

The Maastricht Treaty in 1992 launched the cultural aspects. This was only after a long discussion, which made it clear that we have to remember to separate the national view and the European view.

The Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 declared citizenship as an important theme. A significant part of this is among others granting information skills and access to information to every European.

In addition to this, the European future strategies need to meet the democratic aspects of the information society de-

\* Quotation from the own-initiative report  
'The Role of Libraries in the Modern Societies'.



velopment. One of the crucial points is again general access to information.

Libraries, especially public libraries, are good tools in all of these new areas.

But the European Union does not support just any cultural or citizen-concentrated project in Europe. In the interests of the European Union there is always to be found the European element.

So, what can be done on library policy on the European level, taking into account that libraries are primarily a part of national education and cultural policies?

*The own-initiative report "The Role of Libraries in Modern Societies", adopted by the European Parliament in October 1998, is the first effort to answer these questions.*

The same topics have been discussed in the United States. They have reached the point where especially the problems of those lacking access to digital resources have been studied. The report "Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide" by the US Department of Commerce was released earlier in July 1999. The report is recognising certain risk groups: minorities, low-income persons, the less educated, and children of single parent households, particularly when they reside in rural areas or inner cities. The report calls for public policies and private initiatives to expand affordable access to critical information resources. But it also shows, for the first time as far as I know, that libraries and other community centres really can diminish the information gap between the haves and the have-nots. The 1998 data from the US demonstrates very clearly that community access centres, primarily public libraries, are particularly well used by those groups who lack access at home or at work. E.g. unemployed groups used the Internet in libraries three times as often as an average citizen.

### Earlier actions in EU

In the European Union there have been some efforts to mobilise "the treasures of the European libraries" since the mid-'80s. These discussions and resolutions led to two special library programmes under the 3rd and 4th Framework Programmes of Research and Development (1990-98). The later programme has been known as "Telematics for Libraries". They have been strongly concentrated on IT, because

it has been seen as a good tool to produce better access to the existing, underused library resources. These programmes have had a clear impact on the European library co-operation and development.

Benefits of this work come to public libraries indirectly: common standards and working methods help in the end all kinds of libraries. But it is a fact that nearly all the libraries active in these EU projects are national libraries or big research and university libraries. Two main exceptions are PubliCA, a network of European public libraries, and ECUP, which was a copyright awareness raising project that reached public libraries as well.

A new beginning was the so-called Morgan report in 1997 (The EP Resolution of 13 March 1997 on the Information Society, Culture and Education). In this report libraries were for the first time put clearly onto the place where they belong in the information society.

As one result of the Morgan report, the European Commission informed that it will produce a Green Paper about the role of libraries in the information society. For one reason or another, this was made quite ready but was never published. In this situation the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media in the European Parliament decided to produce an own-initiative report about libraries. The main reason was that they wanted to influence the big issues, which are in preparation in the EU, first of all the Copyright Directive and the 5th Framework Programme, which will have a direct impact on libraries.

I was nominated the rapporteur of the own-initiative report. The report was adopted almost unanimously and with a very encouraging discussion in the Plenary session of the Parliament in October 1998.

### Decisions of the EP concerning library policy

In short, when adopting the own-initiative report, the EP was calling on the Commission and/or the member states to take the following actions:

- Libraries must be taken into account in national and EU information society strategies and in the respective budgets.
- Libraries need more resources for acquiring expensive books.

- The Green Paper on libraries by the Commission must be completed.
- **The users' position must be taken into account in the copyright directive process, the balance must be maintained - this was politically the most important decision in the short run.**
- Support to libraries was demanded from the 5th Framework Programme of Research and Development, e.g. for networking, drafting standards, preserving, and transferring information; there is no longer a named library program under the 5th Framework Programme
- A clearinghouse to solve problems of long-term conservation should be founded.
- Studies concerning permanent paper should be done on European level.
- The member states should take care of digitising their cultural heritage for the future.
- There should be studies and concrete support to libraries in licensing matters, which are/will be the next big issue in library work.
- The EU cultural and information budget should be opened to libraries as well, libraries and their co-operation should be taken into account when planning new programmes.
- Problems of legal deposit of international and multinational materials, especially of electronic materials, should be solved.
- The member states should provide all types of libraries with modern equipment, particularly with Internet connections.
- Free of charge use of public libraries, in the spirit of the UNESCO Public Library Manifest, was demanded.
- Free and easy access via libraries to material produced with the aid of tax revenues was demanded.
- The member states should organise updating education and training for their library professionals.
- A European Union focal point for libraries should be set up (tasks: co-ordination of library affairs and research, training)
- The member states should found European information points at libraries in countries where they do not yet exist.

- Library statistics should be better and more comparable both on national and European level.
- The national Parliament libraries should be opened to the MEPs in countries where this is not yet the practice.

In addition to these, the report strongly stresses that **the library financing must be rethought** in the information society. Without new resources libraries are unable to do everything they are expected to do!

### After the decisions

After the EP adoption of this report, the European Commission informed that it will next prepare a communication about actions to do. It was stated that the report had already served as a discussion paper, and so the need for the Green Paper had disappeared. The communication is in the autumn 1999 still in the making in the Commission DGXIII/2.

As it was stated earlier, the most important of these decisions was upon copyright. Unfortunately the fate of the draft Copyright Directive concerning libraries and users' position has not been in accordance with this EP decision. The general line of changes which have been adopted after the 1997 draft of the European Commission, has clearly been more favourable for the copyright owners. At present the final decision about the copyright directive is still open. It is now up to the governments of the member states to agree about the next version. In the end it must be accepted by the newly-elected present European Parliament, too, because copyright belongs to the co-decision matters. The second big issue in the report, the position of libraries in the 5th R&D Framework Programme is in more positive status. There is a clear lot for library projects in the Information Society Technology (IST) subprogram User-friendly Information Society. Here you find the Action Line III 2.4: Digital Preservation of Cultural Heritage. More information can be found under URL. It is important to notice that these programmes are now equally open for the EU applicant countries as well.

### Traditions and new forms of work in the same house

As it was mentioned earlier, the European Commission R&D Framework Pro-

grammes have concentrated on IT matters. The three cultural programmes, Kaleidoskope, Ariane and Raphael, have not been very useful for libraries, because their scope has been quite narrow. E.g. the books and reading programme Ariane has concentrated on translations. In the coming framework programme Culture 2000 libraries will have more possibilities to get support also for their cultural actions.

What then will be the fate of the traditional tasks of libraries in general? Will the information society wipe out book loaning and poems?

According to the report "The Role of Libraries in Modern Societies" these elements will survive, but will be completed by new media forms. It was stated earlier that culture has a special role in building up the modern society and in mobilising the capacity of its members. The significance of reading is only growing in future. Demands to enlarge and deepen literacy skills become greater and greater. Literacy has a special role in guaranteeing the basic citizen competence to everybody. It is in the society's general interests to offer possibilities to all people to maintain and develop their literacy.

In library work, new technologies offer new possibilities to raise service level, too. Good examples can already now be found all over the world, mainly of course in those countries where Internet is widely used. Some models:

- library catalogues are available via Internet
- the patron can check her/his loaning data from Internet, and even renew the loans
- a patron can order individual service via e-mail according to her/his own interests (e.g. newly acquired publications on a specific topic, reminders about loans due to be returned etc. – this is generally charged)
- a country/area-wide information service via Internet and e-mail; versions open for librarians already exist, others are open for users as well
- link libraries or virtual libraries, where libraries collect and describe high-level linkups to web documents
- discussion lists of librarians, where they can share their professional skills and knowledge, even take part in developing the library policy of the country/area

There is one special comment concerning Internet which I have heard both from small libraries with rejected printed collections in Finland and from African libraries: In case you are on the Internet, the resources your library can offer to the patrons are suddenly multiplied. All at once we have exactly the same resource as the British Library or the Library of Congress. It is amazing, it is revolutionary, and we can use it!

In the complicated modern society libraries have many kinds of answers to many demands of the society, as well as those of the citizens. They have potential means to serve both the information society development and their traditional humanistic tasks. Maybe information technology will even make it easier in the future to combine these elements than it was in the past!

### Practical hints

In case you want to read the original text of the Rynänen Report, here are some hints. The EU documents are not the easiest to find on the web!

### Structure of the Rynänen Report

The Role of Libraries in Modern Societies

European Parliament, document A4-0248/98

**A. References** to the (EU) documents which have been regarded in writing this report, or history of this matter in the European Union

**"Whereas"** points A-EE are a list of circumstances which have to be taken in account when deciding on library policy in the EU

**Decisions** 1-22 are the most important ones.

### B. Explanatory statement

### The discussing part of the paper.

The text of both part A and part B on Internet: [www.publiclibraries.fi/publications/report.htm](http://www.publiclibraries.fi/publications/report.htm)

Final resolution text, adopted in the EP session 23 October, 1998 (only part A):

1. Search the main page of the European Parliament, [www2.europarl.eu.int](http://www2.europarl.eu.int),
2. look for the Plenary sessions,
3. on the next stage choose the report number (A4-0248/98) as the search key!

# *Their role in terms of Social Inclusion, Lifelong Learning, Cultural Policy and Economic Growth*

**Ross Shimmon,  
Secretary General  
of the International Federation  
of Library Associations and  
Institutions (IFLA)**



I want to begin with a quotation: "My life had begun on Park Avenue, up town Park Avenue where the railroad tracks are. It had begun in the invincible and indescribable squalor of Harlem. Here in this ghetto I was born. And here it was intended by my countrymen that I should live and perish.

And in that ghetto I was tormented. I felt caged like an animal. I wanted to escape. I felt if I did not get out I would slowly strangle.

I wanted school to save me from Harlem . . . I knew I was black, of course, but I also knew I was smart. I didn't know how I would use my mind or even if I could. But that was the only thing I had to use. And I was going to get whatever I wanted that way and I was going to get my revenge that way. So I watched the school the way I watched the streets, because part of the answer was there.

Part of the answer was in Dickens and Dostoyevsky, too. I went to the 135th Street Library at least three or four times a week, and I read everything there. I read every single book in that library. I read books like they were some weird kind of food. I was looking in books for a bigger world than the world in which I lived. In some blind and instinctive way I knew what was happening in those books was also happening all around me. And I was trying to make a connection between the books and the life I saw and the life I lived.

You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me the most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were ever alive, or who had ever been alive." \*)

That was James Baldwin speaking in a TV programme in 1981.

That author and that library encapsulate for me, and I hope for you, the subject I have been given to explore today. To quote the American Library Association slogan of a few years ago: "Libraries changes lives". Baldwin was socially excluded from the mainstream. But the Public Library included him. He was clearly motivated to learn and the public library facilitated him to do so on a life-long basis. He became a world-class author –

accessible to millions of other people in libraries around the world. Isn't that what cultural policies drive towards? The public library enabled his own personal economic growth. They do that for whole communities as well as for individuals.

Baldwin's perception of the public library is one that I can relate to strongly. One or two of you know that, although I was born in England, my family roots are in Ireland from each of the two main traditions in that island. I was brought up mainly in one of those traditions. It was only as I gained access to books through libraries, and through reading newspapers other than those read by my family, that I came to realise that there was quite another interpretation of not only history, but also current reality.

Now that I live in The Hague, I don't read British newspapers as much as I used to. I now realise the truth in the allegation that the contents of a typical TV News broadcast can easily be contained on one sheet of a broadsheet newspaper. This becomes more frightening when you read surveys that suggest that many people now rely on television for their main source of news. Even more so when you realise that many channels these days do not have news bulletins at all! Do you find that your eye, with better than cruise missile accuracy, homes in on the word "Library" on the page in a newspapers or magazine? It happened to me the other day. There was an article on a public library being transferred to a "pub" – yes, the traditional English public house, somewhere in the south of England. Not far from where I started my career in a public library nearly 40 years ago. Apparently – if the story is accurate (note the slight tone of scepticism) – a small branch library was to be closed by the local council. They had decided that they could not afford the money for repairs to the roof. It was not heavily used. Other libraries were nearby. You know the story. You've seen it all before – some of you will have experienced it yourselves. Some of the readers (bear with me, I am an un-



\*) James Baldwin speaking in a television programme "My childhood", quoted in: Usherwood, Bob The Public Library as Public Knowledge. London: The Library Association, 1989 pp 147-148.



reconstructed librarian - I still cannot use the term "customer" when it comes to libraries) thought it would be a good idea if the local pub took over the lending of books to the local community. The local council agreed. Some money "saved" by closing the library was made available to buy some new books. Council workers put in the shelves and transferred the books. It is to run on a system of trust with borrowers signing their names in a ledger. No overdue charges will be made. "Brilliant" said one pub customer. "Now I can borrow a book when I come in for my pint of beer".

I think that this story, whether it fairly represents the truth or not, summarises rather neatly the public library paradox.

On the one hand the perceived value of the local library to its community is clearly demonstrated. No community will allow "their" library to be closed without a fight. Elsewhere there have been many such examples. All night sit-ins, occupations, petitions, court cases, plans for voluntary staffing and fund-raising have all been employed to keep libraries open. Not only existing libraries threatened with closure but for new libraries, too. Colleagues in IFLA's Office, Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression here in Copenhagen were telling me of embryonic libraries starting in Cambodia. Voluntary libraries are also springing up in Cuba, despite official intimidation and harassment. I have witnessed similar developments when I worked in Papua New Guinea. Such is the demand for access to information, ideas and works of imagination. And such is the strength of the concept of the public library.

On the other hand, that same library-in-a-pub story demonstrates the extreme poverty of perception of what a high quality modern library is or can be. The article does not reveal (among many other things):

- What happens to the children who presumably used the old library?
- What about people who don't frequent pubs (yes, there are some)?
- What about a reader who wants a book not on the shelf?
- Who arranges the books – in what order?
- What about access to information not in books?
- A quiet read is presumably also a thing of the past?

There was a throwaway line about plans

to place the computer catalogue of the stock of the public library system in the local branch of a bank.

In the business pages of the same newspaper there was a story about a hostile take over by that same national bank by another bank. The journalist was speculating that the bidder would reduce costs by a series of branch closures. So how long will that plan last? This story also serves to illustrate how difficult it is in a democracy to achieve coherence between national policies and local decision making. At the same time as this is going on the Culture Minister is talking about the vital role of public libraries as street corner universities.

The imperfect perception of public libraries is encountered frequently. Quite often by people who are our friends and supporters. Celebrities who join in our campaigns often have a sepia-tinted view of what an ideal public library might have been like in 1953. Formed to defend a library against closure, friends of library groups often have a similarly limited view.

We can do much more. Surely our vision of an all-singing, all-dancing public library can be conveyed to our natural supporters and to a wider audience. After all, there are many good examples in existence – represented by many of you here today.

A few years ago a research consultancy in the UK carried out a study of a number of town centres, because concern was being expressed that, after 5 or 6 o'clock in the evening, there was a decreasing range of facilities available, making them unattractive places in the evenings. That served to encourage crime, vandalism and violence. To their surprise, they found that in each town the one institution which was usually open "after hours" and which people frequented regardless of age, gender, ethnic origin, employment status and wealth, was the public library.

Other places which were open had largely been "colonised" by specific groups. These included, bars and pubs, café's take aways, leisure centres, churches and community centres.

Yet in the public library a reasonable cross-section of the community was present, at ease with each other, making use of the variety of facilities and services available; not only, of course, borrowing books.

The public library is socially inclusive by its very nature. However, in order to remain so, it needs to be (even in the elec-

tronic era) physically present in local communities, open long hours and to provide stocks and services relevant to everyone in its community.

These conditions are, of course, not easy to meet. Let's take opening hours. A few years ago, I was invited to give a talk to some librarians at a meeting held in a new central library in a sizeable town in the west of England. Later that month, there was a national public holiday. (They are usually on Mondays in the UK). Walking into the library I saw a big notice: "This library will be closed on Saturday, Monday and Tuesday". No mention of Sunday. Presumably it was always closed on Sundays. The library was located in a very prominent position in a shopping centre right next door to a well-known supermarket, which would be open all day and late into the evening on that Saturday, Monday and Tuesday and much of Sunday too – while the library was dark. Since then a significant number of public libraries have started to open on Sunday. In some cases it rapidly became one of the busiest days of the week. Meanwhile, many shops and supermarkets have started opening for 24 hours a day. In the town in which I live in England the branch library has very complicated opening hours which I can never remember. It is very frustrating to carry six books to exchange, only to find the place shut! The two supermarkets are open seven days a week for long hours. I don't need to remember when they are open.

By an interesting contrast, in The Hague where I now live, the Central Library has started opening on Sundays – however the shops open a Sunday only once a month – you need to calculate which Sunday it is. The Library is a blaze of light (and enlightenment) when the shops are dark!

Then there's the question of physical presence. There is a move in some countries towards a consolidation of public libraries to achieve a smaller number of "centres of excellence". The argument goes that it is more efficient and effective to provide a full range of stock and services in a small number of larger facilities. People are, in general, more mobile and they are demanding greater range of stock and services and longer hours. We can see the same trend in the retail sector (book shops are an example). The problem is that the people who suffer in such a set up are those who are unable to travel far – young children, the elderly and

In some ways the physical presence of a public library is more important than ever, despite increased mobility and despite the arrival of information and communications technology – partly because it helps to define a community. So many facilities are disappearing from the village centre or the high street. Local schools, post offices, banks, council offices are all being consolidated in many countries. Many of them have moved to out-of-town shopping centres. The presence of a functioning public library is rapidly being recognised as a valuable community asset, acting as a gateway to a range of services and facilities well beyond those of a traditional public library.

- A large number of small libraries present in most communities, or
- A smaller number of larger libraries, each providing a greater range of stock and services.

No doubt the answer will vary from place to place and from time to time.

Today, in some countries, at least, governments and decision-makers are noticing that there is an established network of resource centres already available which people will use, if and when they are properly equipped, for learning new skills.

logical barriers presented by schools and colleges to many people. They are staffed by people who have a commitment to service to their communities and to the free flow of information and ideas. In short, they are capable of helping to deliver a key policy area for many governments and for many communities.

The public library is, I suppose for many people, essentially a cultural institution. It enables an individual, with little or no financial risk, to make adventurous choices in books to read. Not only novels, but also books on other art forms such as architecture, the visual and performing art. And not only among the arts, but other subjects which help to define a culture such as language, history, biography and indeed geography. And not only books of course, but also other media, including sound and video recording and electronic sources. But I wonder whether the full contribution that a public library can make to the cultural life of a community is always fully recognised? The potential synergy between the library and other cultural institutions such as galleries, museums and theatres in the electronic age needs to be explored. There are, in a given area, usually more public library buildings than there are museums, theatres or galleries. This means that the public library can surely act as an electronic gateway to the artefacts, performances and experiences offered by those sister cultural institutions and help to make them more socially inclusive.

create benefits local business. By making available, either in the library itself or by electronic networking, a variety of information of value to businesses, including annual reports, statistics, standards, government regulations, sources of grant-aid and specialist advice, training facilities (whether branded as a business information service or not), the library is supporting local business growth. It should not be forgotten, either, that the library network has an invaluable role in acting as a showcase for the creative industries. I know of no one who borrows books from a public library, but does not buy any books. I know of no one who has a video recorder/player who relies entirely on borrowing videos from the public library. Similarly with audio recordings. It's back to the adventurous choice again.

As IFLA's Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom says: "A commitment to intellectual freedom is a core responsibility for the library and information profession".

- a reasonable level of funding
- a committed central government
- similarly committed local politicians and administrators.

The gap between the ideals we aspire to and the reality sometimes appears daunting. However, the cost of providing the kind of service outlined in the UNESCO/IFLA Public Library Manifesto, and the proposed Copenhagen Declaration, to be discussed later in this conference, probably amounts to less than the cost of a small candy bar per person per week.

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# Public Libraries and Regional Development I

**Ioannis Koukiadis,  
MEP, Professor of Law,  
University of Thessaloniki, Greece**

There is a great and increasing emphasis in Europe on regional development policies as a means of creating a competitive, growing and harmonious continent with high levels of employment. In the European Union, the 'structural' funds allocated to assist in redressing economic and social imbalances are targeted on a regional basis.

Amongst other activities, the European Commission supports Regional Information Society Initiatives (RISI/IRISI) aimed at integrating the concept of the information society into regional development and employment policies.

In order to promote debate on relevant fields of applications and services and on key policy issues, a European Regional Information Society Association has been created. It has 29 regions in membership. The main objectives summarise the main thrust of regional information society development in the European Union:

*'to promote universal access to ICT-based services and applications in the regions with a view to generating new employment opportunities, improving quality of life and addressing the challenges of structural adjustment, social inclusion, economic cohesion, democratic decision making and sustainable development in less favoured regions; to enhance the economic and social development of member regions by implementing new ICT-based applications and services, through sharing of good practice in benefiting from new opportunities and reducing risks..'*

A wide range of initiatives has already been tried out across Europe with the intention of increasing access to information and improving ICT skills, such as the promotion of teleworking and the establishment of various agencies and initiatives to increase information and training support to small businesses. But there is one existing institutional network which has not yet been exploited to the full for this purpose.

The Public Library Network is pervasive in all regions of Europe, East, Central and West. In the 28 countries covered by the EC's LIB-ECON2000 survey, 101 million people are registered members of public libraries.

They make 2.2 billion visits per year to their libraries, on average 21.7 visits each [around once every 2 and a half weeks]. They have access to 74,000 static service points and increasingly to services available to them at home through the World Wide Web.

But these data disguise very wide disparities in the type and extent of the services provided and also in the role and impact of public libraries. In the most advanced public library systems, popular and well-designed added value services exist to provide information and support the needs of business and other sections of the community.

In their most traditional role, they are seen as having a purely 'cultural' function providing access to the national literary output - or at best relevant as a relatively unstructured support system for those going through education. In the worst cases, staff are poorly skilled, paid and motivated and services too insufficiently funded to develop.

The European Commission has funded a great deal of innovative work under its RISI Programme. The agenda has been broadly that of Bangemann: the promotion of the information society with the objective of stimulating and making more competitive the European economy. But the RISI initiative also had a strong social dimension. It called for initiatives to avoid the growth of a gap between the information rich and the information poor; to promote access, and demonstrated an awareness of the downside of the information society - that virtual life is not real life and that there would be an increasing need to mitigate the 'screen and chair' existence implied for many individuals by an ICT-based society.

Public libraries seem in many ways ideally placed to address these requirements. They are an existing 'mainstream' social institution and therefore provide a ready-made framework for sustainability. They are already in the education and information business and in many places staff have long been engaged with information technology. Their political profile in Europe has been heightened, not least through the work of the European Commission's Telematics for Libraries Research Programme

However, in many cases, they have in the past been identified with a somewhat conservative managerial and professional outlook. If they are to address the issue of employability and information society skills in a serious way, and to provide relevant services of high impact, a significant institutional transformation would be required.

The question is what role public libraries can and will play in:

- extending citizen and SME access to ICT and services;
- increasing employable skills through ICT training opportunities;
- contributing to increased recognition and use of ICT-based information for social and economic development;
- building information society partnerships to increase access between public and private sector and between public libraries and other information and service providers.

In order to achieve this it is clear that the public library role would need to evolve from resource-based to access-based services, a development that has started to come about in its own right in some countries. In the future, home and workplace access to library services, via the Internet, will be an important part of the picture.

I will now hand over to my colleague Ioannis Trohopoulos, Director of the Public Library of Veria, Greece to describe, in English, an important initiative in this area.





# Public Libraries and Regional Development II

**Ioannis Trohopoulos, Director,  
Public Library of Veria, Greece**



The ISTAR Network's proposal was submitted and accepted under the RISI2 call. Strikingly it was the only project within the RISI programme that incorporated libraries of any kind. The project began in 1997 and was timed to last two years, although it is currently planned to extend until April 2000. It is funded to the extent of 2 million Euro and represents an important opportunity to demonstrate the case for investment in public libraries around the information society agenda.

ISTAR's key objectives are to develop pilot services for promoting awareness and providing access to ICT in 'peripheral' European regions. 'Peripheral' in this context means 'those with relatively poor access to markets and networks'. The three regions chosen are:

- Prefecture of Imathia (Central Macedonia, Greece)
- Western Education and Library Board (WELB) (Northern Ireland, UK) - an administrative region for these activities only
- Thüringer Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur (Germany) - a federal region

Essex County Libraries (UK) is the coordinator and provider of expertise, with management subcontracted to Education for Change Ltd.

The key concept is that ISTAR services must support the regional economic 'drivers' in each region. The development of the services involves training staff so that they can in turn train users. ISTAR networks are based on public libraries but would also incorporate in partnership other public and private sector agencies in the business of providing access and raising awareness of ICT and information. The clear aim is not to compete but to develop partnerships with other related national and regional initiatives and networks in the public and private sector. These partnerships will be built with a view to sustaining the services, after the project. ISTAR Networks have access points based in partner organisations as well as in libraries.

Therefore, the ISTAR Network in each partner region is providing a 'suite' of training, information and awareness-raising services. The initial aim was to provide broad-based access to ICT and training for several broad target groups:

- SME
- Self-employed
- Teleworkers
- Open/distance/lifelong learners

The basic technologies involved are not difficult to guess. They are the common currency of the information society, for example:

- Internet/Intranet/WWW
- E-mail & FTP
- Software applications (Microsoft Office & Windows)
- Communications - Mobile/Satellite/ISDN/Leased lines
- Hardware, PCs, servers, scanners etc.
- Basic data and information standards also play a key role.

The project spent about one year in the feasibility and definition stage in which intensive marketing work was done to identify user needs in each region. The case had to be made to the EC evaluators that public libraries could deliver these kinds of services in response to clear demand, before the project was allowed to continue to the operational phase.

It became clear to the project team that human staff resources were the key to service design and delivery. ICT competence, information content knowledge, training skills and interpersonal skills, were the key factors. Projects of this size cannot resolve infrastructural and connectivity issues at regional 'macro-level'. Therefore, the focus is on institutional and inter-institutional infrastructure for service delivery. Services must spring from regional needs and recognise 'cultural' and political issues.

During the first year staff recruitment and training, equipment and network procurement, service promotion and business planning were also undertaken.

We looked hard at the issue of what it takes to assure the quality of staff and



services. The need for accredited qualifications was examined - in particular the appropriateness of the European Computer Driving License (ECDL). We have also devoted much attention to the development of performance measures and have designed an extensive scheme of data collection and analysis to tell us what is happening.

The configuration of agencies grouped within the ISTAR Networks in each region varies according to its institutional infrastructure.

In *Thüringen*, seven libraries/local municipalities are working together with the Landesfachstelle für Öffentliche Bibliotheken (Consulting Agency), the Thüringen Chamber of Commerce, Adult Education Centre and Universities including PATON (On-line Patent Information).

Thüringen is part of the former GDR and is characterised by the decline of heavy industry, consequent high unemployment and a wish to replace lost jobs through a move to the service industries, crafts, tourism. Public Libraries there are the responsibility of individual municipalities. Their role until now has been a traditional one concerned with cultural access and the book. Membership stands at about 12-13% of the population. The ISTAR services there target public library users and some specific populations such as job seekers, senior citizens, SMEs, the self-employed and lifelong learners.

The ISTAR network run by the *Western Education and Library Board* (WELB) in Northern Ireland also involves a college of further and higher Education, a Folk Park museum and a prison. There is a high demand for IT training in the region. Although library membership is high [around 50% of the population as elsewhere in the UK], the IT skills of library staff were not in the main high at the outset of the project.

This thinly populated area is heavily dependent upon public sector spending for employment and wishes to develop private sector jobs. Target groups for ISTAR services are small enterprises

(limited support for firms using up to 10 computers), distance learners (this rural area offers limited classroom tuition), Internet users, teleworkers and professionals requiring enhanced ICT skills and problem solving support.

In *Imathia*, Greece, the ISTAR Network is centred upon Veria Public Library, which has recently opened the most modern public library building in Greece. Unusually in Greece, the role of the library is well accepted and understood by the community, with membership well above the 13% national average. The network includes the Chamber of Commerce, the Office of Industrial Development, Naousa, the Trade Union Labour Institute, Veria and the independent public library of a small municipality, Plati.

With a population of about 180,000 people, Imathia has traditionally depended upon fruit and wine growing. It has no major educational institutions - Thessaloniki is the nearest major centre over an hour away by road - and is characterised by a slow penetration of ICT, the Internet, and poor telecommunications infrastructure inhibiting remote access.

The target sectors for ISTAR are SMEs, specific economic sectors [such as wine and tourism], lifelong learners/adult re-trainers, public library users and Internet users.

Beginning in the spring and early summer of 1999, the ISTAR Networks have begun to introduce their new services. There are considerable regional variations in the pace and timing of their introduction. Not all services have been introduced in every region. The services are being monitored and evaluated carefully by means of a variety of methods such as monitoring team visits, user and impact surveys, diaries and counting, focus groups and case studies - and the services are evolving in accordance with the evidence obtained.

Nevertheless, it is possible to group the ISTAR services into 16 categories, which can be further divided into 4 main areas:

### **1. Awareness raising**

- Computer awareness sessions
- Office package awareness sessions
- Internet taster sessions
- Electronic imaging awareness

### **2. Information access**

- Business information
- Partners' databases/catalogues
- Reference enquiries

### **3. 'Formal' training**

- Office packages
- E-mail
- Web site design
- Self-tutored 'core skills'
- Web searching and web site evaluation

### **4. Paid services**

- Workstation use
- Web site hosting
- Video conferencing
- Electronic image capture processing

Although the operation of these services is only a few months old, it is clear that there is heavy demand for it and a high take-up. The enhanced image and heightened profile which has been gained by the libraries and their ISTAR partners is making their sustained post-project funding look attractive to their funding bodies.

### **To give a flavour of this:**

In the 7 Thüringen municipalities - Erfurt, Gera, Gotha, Greiz, Ilmenau, Meiningen and Nordhausen - over 2,500 people have attended training in groups or one-to-one since the services were launched, whilst over 10,000 have used the Internet facilities at the service points. Contact has been established with the local job centres and the libraries provide enhanced access to job information. The ISTAR services have started working with young adults to help them apply for employment or apprenticeship.

In the smaller population area of Imathia, more than 1000 have enrolled

for the awareness raising and training sessions which were introduced first. In the small village of Plati, population of 1000, 20% of the population has enrolled as an ISTAR member. Some of the region's wine producers has provided information for a regional web site on the wine industry and the number is growing rapidly.

In WELB, the ISTAR services are being used as a pilot for a much wider introduction of ISTAR services. Several new libraries are being designed with ISTAR style facilities incorporated. One point already noted is that the increased range of services appears to have increased demands on staff by 10-15%.

The experience is raising a number of important issues which are being addressed by the project in each region. For example, what is the relationship between ISTAR Networks and public libraries and other training providers in the public and private sector. Should it be that the ISTAR Networks focus on awareness raising and introductory training and then assist users to find more advanced training through other providers, if they require it? Should this relationship be formalised in some way? Can the ISTAR library model introduced in WELB and Thüringen whereby ICT training and problem solving is provided on a 1:1 basis be sustained in the longer term as demand grows?

A major effect of all this, from the public library standpoint, is the experience of project-based development, of monitoring and evaluation of service impact and of learning new roles for librarians.

What is the role and need for charging for services in order to ensure sustainability? It seems likely that the ISTAR services will be a success. In a few countries of Europe, the development of new roles for public libraries to do with regional employment, democracy and social inclusion is making rapid strides, driven by government policy. But this progress is very uneven and in many countries it has hardly begun. ISTAR is only a pilot



**Gathering around the stand with library brochures and leaflets from all over Europe**

project. A very great deal remains to be done to motivate public libraries to review and extend the scope of their services in line with need, to act in partnership with other information providing agencies and to convince their funding bodies of the need to support this.

As a final thought, one vital concern is the development of models for the quality assurance of such services. What standards of staff qualification, partnership organisation, service content, technical support, performance and social impact should an ISTAR-style service seek to attain? It may well be worth further exploring the benchmarking of these services and possibly the development of a system for broad European accreditation based on achievement of certain standards - and of a system of support to assist that achievement.





# The Irish Strategy

**Tom O'Mahony,  
Assistant Secretary  
of the Department of the  
Environment and Local Government,  
Ireland**

Throughout Europe, the pace of change in society, in the economy and, particularly, in technology, is unprecedented. This gives rise to challenges and to opportunities for policy makers. In looking for the best responses to these new and exciting challenges and opportunities, we must not overlook the potential contribution of some of our traditional public services that are so long established as to be taken somewhat for granted. One of the best possible examples of this potential contribution provides the theme for this conference.

In 1998, the report of the review of public library policy in Ireland, entitled *Branching Out*, showed that the public library service was ideally positioned to play a major role in tackling two of the main priorities facing policy makers today. I had the honour of chairing the project team which carried out the review, and, in the foreword to the report, I pointed out that the Irish Government had included both of the following among its overall policy objectives:

- to ensure that Ireland moves rapidly to embrace the opportunities of the Information Society so as to support economic and social progress as well as a more participative democracy
- to establish an inclusive society in which all citizens can participate fully in the social and economic life of the country.

I noted that the public library service had characteristics that made it particularly well-placed to further these objectives. It is a service that is widely-used and widely-appreciated. It has service points at local level throughout every part of the country. The training and expertise of library staff is particularly suited to the responsibility of guiding citizens of all backgrounds through the learning, enlightenment and public information opportunities that are now available.

The report set out a comprehensive strategy to enable this potential to be achieved. The response of the Irish Government was immediate and over-

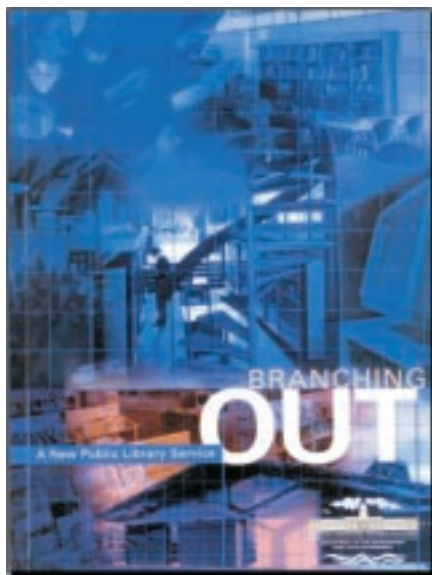
whelmingly positive. The general strategy was accepted and resources were provided to begin the implementation programme, which is now underway.

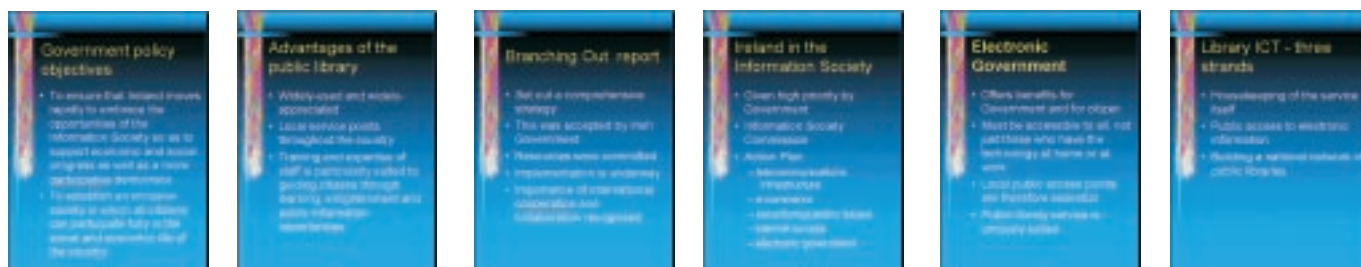
The two central policy objectives which I identified earlier are common to most if not all of our countries, and the fact that this conference is taking place shows that there is a general appreciation throughout Europe of the role which public libraries can play in furthering these objectives. In our own report, we emphasised the importance of international co-operation and collaboration, and indeed acknowledged the work of PubliCA and other international organisations working to promote and develop public libraries. We also expressed the hope that our own public library system could make some contribution to the development of public libraries in an international and particularly an EU context. Consequently, I am especially pleased to have been invited to address you and I hope that the details of our strategy will be of interest to you.

## ***Ireland in the Information Society***

Perhaps I should begin with an important piece of background. The Irish Government has placed a great emphasis on responding to the challenges of the Information Society. It established an Information Society Commission and, based on its recommendations, published an Action Plan in January 1999 which is intended to develop a true Information Society in Ireland. The Action Plan deals with a range of enabling measures, including telecommunications infrastructure, e-commerce and security and regulatory issues.

Of more direct relevance to us today, it deals with issues which are at the heart of our discussions also - issues such as ensuring that Internet access is extended to as many people as possible, that its benefits are not confined to those who can afford their own hardware, and that public services in general will move towards making as much use as possible of elec-





tronic means to carry out their interactions with the citizen - the concept often referred to as electronic government.

The prospect of electronic government offers substantial potential benefits for both the Government and the citizen. Service delivery will be quicker, more convenient and less expensive on both sides. However, if these benefits are to be fully achieved, electronic government must be accessible to all citizens and not confined to those who have access to the necessary technology in their homes or workplaces. Such a restriction, apart from being inefficient, would be very undesirable on equity grounds.

It is clear therefore that the move towards electronic government will have to be accompanied by the provision of locations throughout the country, at which citizens can access the computers of the various Government Departments and Agencies, obtain whatever information they require and carry out the various dealings which would previously have required written correspondence or personal visits.

When we were writing the Branching Out report, it was of great benefit to us to know that the Government was attaching such importance to the development of electronic government and that the need for local access points had been identified. In the report we were able to build on this by stressing the unique suitability of the public library service as the means to satisfy this need. We pointed out that, in comparison to any other access points which might be considered, the library service has the advantage of trained staff who are comfortable with information and are used to dealing with the public.

Library staff are also used to categorising, verifying and assessing the quality of information. With the explosion in information, particularly information delivered electronically, the librarian's experience as a mediator of information will be particularly useful, both in assessing information for the user and in transferring information-handling skills to the user.

### **ICT Infrastructure**

Let's look now at the actual recommendations of the report, insofar as ICT is concerned.

In the Branching Out report, and in the implementation that is now underway, the development of high-quality information and communication technology infrastructure is seen as central to the strategy. It is also seen as extremely urgent - the report notes that the pace of development in ICT is so fast that the public library service needs to get to grips with it quickly or it will be too late - it will lose out to other service providers who would not have the public libraries' ethos of universal access and would not be in a position to supply the added value that the trained librarian can offer.

### **The strategy identifies three main strands to ICT in public libraries**

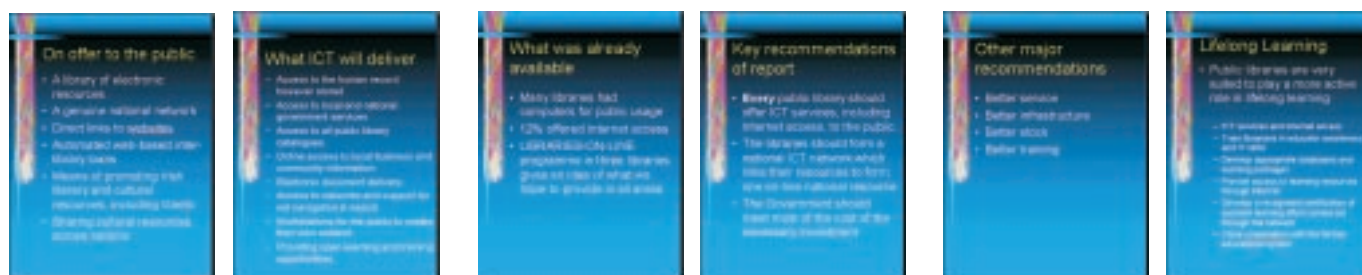
The first relates to using ICT for the housekeeping of the service. This covers functions such as accessions, cataloguing, circulation and management information. I will not look at this in detail today - while it is clearly important in improving the efficiency of the service, it is less central to the priority objectives mentioned earlier.

The second strand relates to giving the public access to electronic information, while the third relates to using ICT to build a national network of public libraries. Taken together, these two strands lead us to an entirely new level of public access to information and knowledge, wherever it is held. The public will be offered

- a library of electronic resources selected by librarians, including their own databases
- a genuine national network
- direct links to web sites
- an automated web-based interlibrary loans system
- a means of promoting Irish literary and cultural resources, including the Gaelic language
- the opportunity to share our cultural resources with the library users of other countries and in turn to enjoy access to theirs.

The provision of ICT will achieve this by

- giving access to the human record in whatever form it may be stored
- giving access to all government services, national and local
- giving nation-wide access to all public library catalogues
- making local business and community information accessible online
- providing electronic document delivery
- providing access to networks and support for net-navigation and information-searching
- providing workstations for the public to create their own content
- providing open learning and training opportunities.



The position at the time the report was prepared was that a number of libraries were already providing computers for public usage; these were mainly used to access CD-ROMs.

About 12% of the branches surveyed offered Internet access. The scale of the service available would vary from library to library, but perhaps I can give you an example that would illustrate the best of what has been available to date.

Three libraries, in Dublin, Limerick and Mayo form the European starting-point for Microsoft Corporation's LIBRARIES-ON-LINE programme. This is a partnership that provides public Internet and multimedia access in American and Canadian public libraries and which is aimed particularly at redressing the problem of potential exclusion from the Information Society in areas of high unemployment and social deprivation.

I have visited the Dublin Library in which this programme is available. There are 8 PCs in a Local Area Network, equipped with Internet access using ISDN lines, and a range of CD-ROM-based multimedia programmes. There is no charge for access to the facility, and since it opened two years ago the level of usage has consistently run at around 95%. Apart from simply surfing the web and accessing multimedia programmes, users in the library construct their own web-sites and set up their own e-mail addresses. This creates a real community awareness of the Information Society at the most accessible local level, in the public library.

This example gives us an idea of what we hope to provide in all areas. The recommendation of the report was that **every** public library should offer ICT serv-

ices, including Internet access, to the public and, taken together, the libraries should form a national ICT network which links the resources of individual libraries to form one on-line national resource. To make sure that this happened, and happened quickly, the bulk of the cost of the necessary investment should be provided to the library authorities by the Government.

### Other important aspects of the report

While I am focusing particularly on the Information Society aspects of the strategy, I need to put these in context since the report makes a large number of recommendations concerned with improving the availability, accessibility, coverage and quality of public library services. We need to look at the picture as a whole; if the public library is to play the central role we envisage in tomorrow's society, we must do much more than simply fit it out with a few PCs and modems! The other recommendations include measures lead-

**better service:** library authorities are to develop the services they offer by opening longer and better hours. (While the report recommends an average increase of 30% in opening hours, you will appreciate of course that "longer opening hours" and "better opening hours" are different concepts. The library must be open at the times that the public wish to use it, and this may need considerable flexibility in the staffing arrangements)

**better infrastructure:** a major programme of capital investment is to take place over the next eight years to ensure that the infrastructure is of high quality

and is distributed equitably

**better stock:** there is to be a substantial upgrading in the range and quality of stock

**better training:** much greater priority is to be given to the training and ongoing development of library staff.

I should also refer to lifelong learning, which also features strongly in other contributions to this conference.

One organisation that made a submission to our review group described lifelong learning as "the defining feature of higher education in the twenty-first century and beyond". Our report concluded that the public library can be an effective agent of change in building a learning society. It is long established as a community-based open learning centre that uniquely is open and freely available to citizens of all ages and educational levels. Increasingly, the use by public libraries of information technologies as an educational tool for use by the public enhances the role of the public library in supporting education and lifelong learning. This is particularly true for those who are unable to participate in formal education for reasons of disability, isolation or who wish to engage in learning activity in parallel to undertaking career or family obligations.

Our report recommended that public libraries should take a more active position in this area. The provision of ICT services, including Internet access, in every library is clearly an important step forward. In addition, the report recommended

- training librarians in educator awareness skills so that they can deal more effectively with user enquiries,





and in IT skills so that they can fully exploit the potential of electronic information retrieval

- developing databases and learning packages appropriate to the needs of defined community learner groups and individuals, and providing access to relevant learning packages and resources through public library Internet facilities
- developing a recognised certification of assisted learning effort carried out through the public learning access network.

The report also recommended that there should be close co-operation between the public library system and the formal educational system. Shortly after the publication of the report, the Department of Education and Science published a Green Paper on lifelong learning which recognised the important role of the public library. We have involved that Department in the Steering group which is overseeing the implementation of our report and I am certain that there will also be very close co-operation at local level between the public libraries and the educational institutions.

### **Implementation**

I have outlined what the report recommended and I mentioned earlier that the Government had accepted it; so what is actually happening?

This strategy is being implemented at present. Every library authority has been

asked to have Internet PCs in place in each branch by the end of this month - the number of PCs to be appropriate for the size and level of usage of the branch. The Government is providing funding for the hardware, software, connectivity and the various related costs - the first phase is costing £IR 1 million and considerable more money will be made available for later phases.

The Information Society Commission, which is responsible for shaping and overseeing the implementation of a strategic framework for the development of the Information Society in Ireland, will be running a major promotion for a week in mid-November. Entitled Netdays, it will give people who have little or no knowledge of the Internet an opportunity to explore the new technology and it will also be aimed at raising public awareness about the Information Society generally. The public library service will feature strongly in the promotion.

So, the first stage of the implementation should see Internet access available in every public library by the end of this month. This is, of course, only the starting-point and is relatively easy to achieve. The next challenge is a greater one - to develop the national network of library ICT in such a way that the full benefits I outlined earlier can be achieved. As part of the implementation process arising from the Branching Out Report, we have established a Steering group which involves librarians and administra-

tors and given it the task of driving this development. There is no shortage of funding; the Irish Government is totally committed to the concept of an inclusive Information Society and is willing to provide whatever financial resources are required to make it happen. Money, however, is not enough. It will be necessary for both librarians and administrators to respond quickly and flexibly to the opportunities now presenting themselves. I am glad to say that all of the indications to date are that they are more than willing to do so.



# The Portuguese Strategy

**Mr. José Manuel Carreira Marques, the Mayor of Beja**



**I**n Portugal, up until a dozen years ago the situation of the libraries, public libraries in particular, was extremely poor for several reasons, the main one being the fact of not being considered a public service. Élitist concepts ruled libraries, which were installed in old buildings and could hardly be distinguished from deposits for books. Their users were students and researchers since their holdings were hardly ever brought up to date.

Although some librarians had been fighting this state of affairs, it was only in 1982, during a meeting of librarians, the public opinion and the politicians were alerted by the issuing of a manifesto condemning the absence of a policy concerning public libraries in Portugal.

In 1981 only 25% of the cities had a library covering 54% of the population, half of which was concentrated in Lisbon and Oporto. The percentage of users among this population was extremely low.

By then the newly created Instituto Português do Livro e da Leitura made a commitment to change the situation and took a series of initiatives with a view to preparing a programme of action.

Seminars on library development were organised, training courses for assistant librarians were promoted, and some librarians were granted a scholarship abroad. An exhibition on "Public Libraries" was devised for the 1984 Lisbon Book Fair; the exhibition was later shown in several other places around the country.

The necessary foundations for the creation of a national Public Libraries Network were launched as a culmination of this intensive work and with the joint efforts of the Portuguese Library Association, the Instituto Português do Livro e da Leitura, some municipalities and the working group created within the Secretaria de Estado da Cultura and co-ordinated by Maria José Moura.

The Portuguese strategy is simple and efficient. It is based on partnerships between the Government and the Local Authorities. The Government acts as pro-

motor and guarantor of a new policy for the sector, whereas the Local Authorities act as the more direct and interested agents.

Through the Instituto Português do Livro e da Leitura, now designated Instituto Português do Livro e das Bibliotecas (IPLB), the Government is committed to giving technical and financial support to the interested Local Authorities who guarantee the fulfilment of well-defined rules concerning functional areas, collections development, qualified staff, and organisation and running of the libraries.

The financial support of the Government amounts to 50% of the cost of the contract, including the building, furniture, computer equipment, materials (collections, videos, CDs, etc.) and Internet access.

As a result, the current situation of the libraries in Portugal is very different from that seen a few years ago. 166 contracts have been signed between the IPLB and the Local Authorities, and 80 new libraries have already been inaugurated. It is expected that, with the new millennium, the entire national territory will be covered.

Nowadays, municipal libraries are established in new buildings or in buildings adapted for the purpose. Their interior is comfortable and attractive, the furniture is modern and functional and the staff is friendly, professional and well-informed.

The library is a living entity which should grow and evolve, but which can also die due to lack of resources. Therefore, the continuing update of its holdings of all kinds of media is a major objective to be accomplished to allow the library to efficiently fulfil its duty to the community it serves.

The UNESCO MANIFESTO proclaims, "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 the social groups".



Collections and services must be of high quality and suitable to the local needs and conditions. Holdings should reflect the current trends and the evolution of society, as well as the memory of humankind and the product of its imagination. However, they must also be instruments of freedom, innovation and creativity, presenting permanent challenges to its users.

The municipal libraries seek to learn about the community's interests and to fulfil the needs of its users, offering its services and collections to the entire population, without any kind of discrimination.

Therefore, it is not enough to inaugurate the library and then rest on one's laurels. Because the library is a living entity and must reach broader objectives, its budget should allow for its continued update, whether in terms of collections or equipment or services, paying special attention to the technological evolution and the most modern training and information techniques.

In Beja, the library is already a centenarian and has undergone the vicissitudes of each epoch. It was once a closed library, elitist, unsuitable to the interests of the population, providing tight and dark spaces; but it was also subject to the tides of change represented in Portugal by the Revolution of April 74. It is true that it did not become the first priority. There was so much to do in the country! But its time came as a consequence of a growing consciousness that citizens are all the more free, the more they know and the more well-informed they are. In the old and inadequate facilities, a process of radical change was initiated, largely due to this consciousness and, above all, due to the expertise, devotion and enthusiasm of its new team and of its tireless and creative director.

Aware of the new public libraries policy, which the Government had defined and the consequent technical and financial support, we embarked on the daring initiative of designing a new library.

It was an audacious challenge because we were conscious of the local realities and of the main objectives to which we were committed.

Beja is a city of about 25,000 inhabitants, whose main vocations are trade and services. It is situated in an essentially rural environment, with an extremely high rate of illiteracy and a significant rate of human desertification. For these reasons, the placing of the library within the urban web of the city had to be well pondered; its architectural project had to be outstanding, attractive and providing multiple and functional spaces; its equipment had to be modern and comfortable; its staff had to be carefully selected and adequately trained; its collections had to be completely renewed; its opening hours had to be inviting; its services and initiatives had to be diverse, scheduled and of quality; its management model had to show evidence of a rupture with the old and obsolete model.

And so, on the 30th of April 1993, the new library of Beja opened its doors to the public with a collection of 43,000 titles, 8,300 registered users, 1 librarian, 8 assistant librarians and 3 other members of staff.

Five and a half years later the library had 85,000 titles, more than 15,000 registered users, 53,000 books, and more than 37,000 audio CDs had been loaned, and the staff had increased to 2 librarians, 26 assistant librarians and 1 clerk. The average daily rate of users was 1,000.

By the end of 1998 the library had organised 104 colloquies and lectures on a variety of subjects, hosted 24 book presentations and implemented 94 projects and activities for children and young people.

The challenge had been overcome! The adhesion of children, young people and adults impressed even us. The library of Beja became the "town square".

The library has welcomed some of the greatest personalities of the Portuguese culture. Hundreds nowadays attend the initiatives, which in the past were

addressed to an elite of a few dozen people. During the commemorations of the World Book Day there was not enough room in the building for the thousands of people that had turned up, obliging us to stop the traffic on the street.

Today, with approximately 100,000 titles, the building has grown too small. The auditorium can no longer accommodate everyone. The cafeteria is constantly full. The adult section has become undersized, just as the depot, the treatment room and the spaces assigned to the community services are already too small.

Completely automated, the library of Beja, which is named Municipal Library of José Saramago in honour of the Literature Nobel Prize winner, already possesses a project for its physical extension and for its expansion of human resources.

Four branches have already been created in small villages under the jurisdiction of the municipality, and nine school libraries are receiving technical support.

Concerning international co-operation, the library is involved in the Liberator project in the framework of the Telematics for Libraries Programme of the European Union.

Currently, the library is open from 9.30 to 12.30 and from 14.00 to 23.00, but the users are demanding its opening during lunch time as well.

In the last few years, 26% of the annual budget of the municipality of Beja has been assigned to the Cultural Department, of which an increasingly significant part is handed over to the Municipal Library.

For us, it is perfectly clear today that the investment in the cultural activities is just as important or even more important than the economical activities.

Beja owes much of its public acknowledgement, which has been growing in the last few years, to its library, which has become a national reference.





# Digital Heritage and Cultural Content

**Mr. Bernard Smith,  
Head of Unit DGXIII/E2  
Cultural Heritage Applications**



## Agenda

- Key Action III
- 1999 Work Programme
  - Action Lines
  - Results of the 1st Call
  - 2nd Call
- Perspectives

for the 2000 Work Programme

*Two essential elements: focus and integration*

## IST (1998-2002)

- Key actions:
    - systems and services for the citizen
    - new methods of work and electronic commerce
    - multimedia content and tools
    - essential technologies and infrastructures
    - future and emerging technologies
    - networks for researchers
- Accessibility, usability, affordability, dependability, interoperability*

## Multimedia Content & Tools

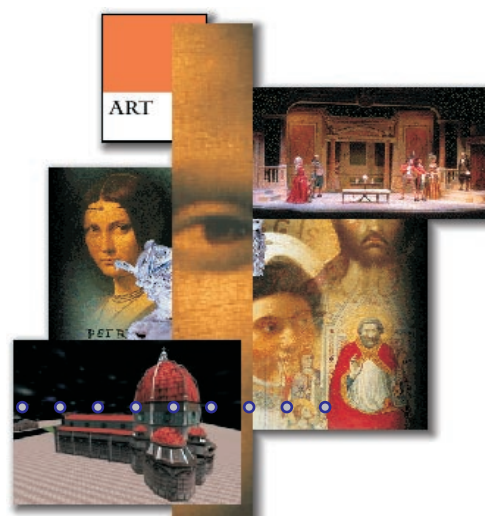
Focus on the development and application of technologies, systems and methods for creating, processing, managing, accessing and exploiting content

- content has many guises:
  - **information** for business-oriented electronic publishing
  - **knowledge and skills** within educational and cultural institutions
  - **linguistic and meta-data** in information systems
  - **data objects** for intelligent access, management and filtering

Key Action III aims to:

- improve the functionality, usability and acceptability of future information products and services
- enable linguistic and cultural diversity and support creative processes
- contribute to the valorisation and exploitation of Europe's cultural heritage
- enhance education and training systems for lifelong learning

*content-centric and user-driven*



- Interactive electronic publishing
- Digital heritage and cultural content
- Education and training
- Human language technologies
- Information access, filtering, analysis and handling

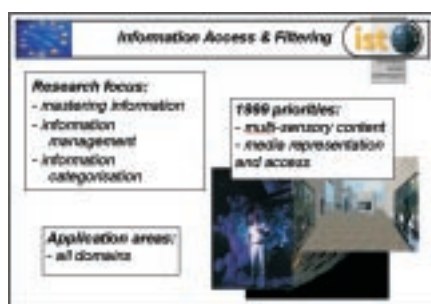
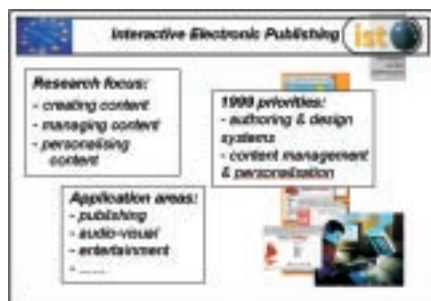
*Striking a balance between competitiveness and the emerging cultural economy*

## Extract from the IST Programme

“The work on digital heritage and cultural content will aim to improve access to cultural patrimony, facilitate its valorisation and stimulate cultural development by expanding the key contribution of libraries, museums and archives to the emerging ‘culture economy’, including economic, scientific and technological development. Actions will particularly address new digital processes and cover business and economic models, especially those which stimulate new partnerships through networking and new services for the citizen”

## RTD Objectives extract from the IST Programme

- integrate and improve access to heterogeneous distributed and networked collections and repositories and the information they hold, in digital and traditional form (e.g. library holdings, museum exhibition material, public archive contents, multimedia art or sound archives, digital film collections and digital cinematic distribution networks)
- improving the functionalities of large-scale repositories of content by providing rich and powerful interactive features and advanced management and copyright techniques
- preservation of and access to valuable multimedia content from multiple sources, covering electronic materials and electronic surrogates of fragile physical objects
- take-up: a key aspect will be validations and demonstrations



Inconceivable that memory institutions that organise Europe's cultural and intellectual record are missing from the debate ...

- they collect the memories of our peoples, communities, institutions and individuals
- they collate what becomes legacy to future generations
- they preserve the heritage of the future
- they support democratic processes and public debate
- they are important to learning, commerce, tourism, as well as personal fulfilment

#### Strategic RTD Objectives:

- improve the accessibility of Europe's scientific and cultural collections (cultural landscape)
- add value to cultural objects and resources
- generate new digital art forms
- develop sustainable cultural environments - both technically and organisationally
- establish a framework of agreed infrastructures, standards, methodologies, guidelines

#### Operational Foci:

- applications-based research and demonstration
- memory organisations, e.g. museums, libraries, archives
- involving citizens, knowledge workers, and professionals in memory organisations
- building on and extending national, European and international initiatives
- new alliances between institutions and with technology and communications providers

#### Must concentrate on:

- technical innovation and ways to attack core problems:
  - improving access
  - create new services
  - preserve fragile rare objects
  - safeguarding future availability

- socio-economic drivers
- exploitation and sustainability
- multidisciplinary teams, sound management of resources

#### Remember core values:

- nature, quality and value of the content
- target memory organisations, their problems must be our problems (but not all of them....)
- have impact, and make sure people are aware of it
- create a lasting "info-structure" of technologies, test-beds, guidelines, standards, new alliances, human and institutional networks

#### The Ist Call

- 8 out of 12 Action Lines open
- 578 proposals received
  - 201 ranked
  - 90+ retained for negotiation
- Total funding requested 1.08 Beuro
- Total funding available >120 Meuro
- 3930 organisations participated
- Approx. 600 organisations negotiating
  - 36% industrial (20% SME)
  - 55% higher educational and research establishments

#### Action Line III.2.3

Access to Scientific and Cultural Heritage covered:

- Digital library applications
- Virtual representations of cultural heritage
- support measures
- and links with Action Line III.2.2 on content management issues

Digital library applications covers:

- access, search and retrieval functionalities
- resource discovery and meta-data
- thematic collections and subject gateways (portals)
- distributed and multi-owned collections
- distributed databases and data-interoperability

focus on 'cross-domain content navigation' including core content collections and methods of accessing them  
Virtual representations of cultural heritage covers:

- exploitation of scientific and cultural heritage through innovative web-based services
- visual representations using streaming video, animation, 3-D and VR
- enhancing learning and game playing
- improving user interaction and understanding

*focus on how users can interact with cultural content, or surrogates of such content*

### The 2nd Call

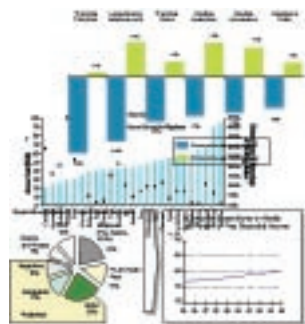
RTD

- III.1.1 Social and business models
- III.2.4 Digital preservation of cultural heritage
- III.5.1 Multi-sensory forms of content
- III.5.2 Media representation and access

Take-up

- State-of-the art authoring and design systems
- Personalised learning initiative
- Multilinguality in digital content and services

*closing on 17 January 2000*



#### III.1.1 Social and Business Models

- Social, economic, organisational and behavioural change
- Future impact on growth and employment
- Technology impact studies
- Convergence issues
- New business models

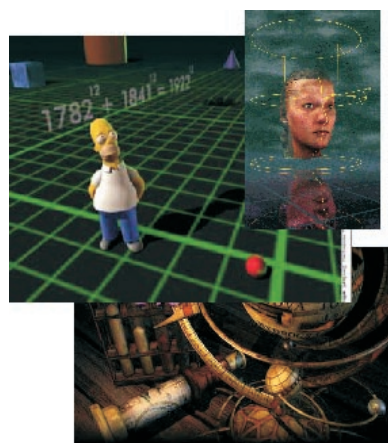
- Valuing information assets
- New metrics and quality control criteria



#### III.2.4 Digital

##### Preservation of Cultural Heritage

- Strategies for long-term repositories and digital archives
- Digital archiving for preserving the content and context of digital objects
- Technical and organisational solutions targeting economies of scale
- Standards for managing and preserving distributed digital collections



#### III.5.1 Multi-Sensory Forms of Content

- New forms of content for enhancing user perception and interaction
- Architectures, models and tools 3D modelling, simulation, animation

- Interactive media editing and post production
- VR and collaborative communities

#### III.5.2 Media Representation and Access

- New coding and indexing technologies Standards for next generation visual, auditory, 3D and multi-sensory media and meta-data
- Search and retrieval by content characteristics
- Consumer digital video
- Wireless network content

#### Take-up measures

- State-of-the-art authoring and design
  - trials promoting creativity in authoring
- Personalised learning
  - trails of re-usable, component based services for education and training
- Multilinguality in digital content and services
  - trails of multi-lingual tools and processes in business, knowledge management and online services

*focus on availability in global markets*

#### Work Programme 2000

- Authoring interactive web content
- Personalising content
- Access to scientific and cultural heritage
- Virtual representations of cultural objects
- School of tomorrow
- The learning citizen
- Natural interactivity and dialogue
- Cross-lingual information management
- Content processing for consumer and mobile platforms
- Information visualisation

#### Access to Digital Collections of Cultural and Scientific Content

To substantially improve access for citizens and professionals to Europe's expanding repositories of cultural and scientific knowledge.



The work should contribute to the creation of a sustainable European cultural landscape and will address global consensus on common specifications and practices for new data models, architectures, benchmarks and metrics, test suites, meta-data directories and trust infrastructures. It will establish or enhance relevant standards.

#### **Focus for Cultural Knowledge:**

innovative systems integration and reference implementations for advanced digital library test-beds federating content and navigation, search and retrieval functions and tools for large-scale, diverse and highly distributed cultural information and concept spaces, and integrating community building tools providing a seamless and tailored approach to sharing and interactive use of internationally distributed and cultural significant resources and collections.

#### **Focus for Scientific Heritage:**

the creation of international science collaboratoria which integrate in a novel way sets of standards, tools and virtual world servers for the collaborative analysis of multi-disciplinary data.

#### **Virtual Representations of Cultural Objects**

To explore and experiment with novel ways of creating, manipulating, managing and presenting new classes of “intelligent”, dynamically adaptive and self-aware digital cultural objects, either held by memory institutions or directly involving digitally born objects and art forms.

The work should focus on and result in the sustainable development of valuable digital repositories. This includes models for future collections and guidelines for integrating real and virtual objects and collections.

The focus is user centred and includes: user interaction and models for interactivity with high-quality virtual representations of valuable cultural objects, and the creation and navigation of virtual cultural and scientific landscapes.

Examples should be developed which show how dynamic user interaction with cultural and scientific content can enhance the user experience. It addresses the experiences of learning, exploring and entertaining for the user.

#### **What to focus on?**

##### **Citizen view:**

- radical new level of friendly self-service access
- advanced mediated access to distributed external resources
- role of community building in service provision
- co-operation across different memory institutions
- focus on virtual and interactive networks, and issues of access rights, quality, authentication, trust, confidence
- link to learning, exploring, playing,

#### **What to focus on?**

##### **Professional view:**

- gateways and highly tailored services for students, academics
- collaboratoria and analysis tools
- new techniques for resource sharing, cross-domain navigation, indexing, classification, meta-data
- understanding management and organisational change
- preservation and digital archiving

#### **Take-up: Cultural and Scientific Heritage - enhancing user experiences**

To improve citizens access to cultural and scientific content. The focus is on memory organisations adding value to their collections and associated services through the use of new technologies. Trails aiming at the adoption and introduction of leading edge technologies have a priority.

Domains of interest include new navigational tools, wireless access to the web, improved visualisation of artefacts and collections, community building for thematic collections etc. In all cases the trails should be driven by an authentic need as expressed by a well defined user profile.

#### **And what then?**

- Access and visualisation of cultural and scientific collections
- Intelligent cultural and knowledge gateways for the citizen
- Digital archiving and long-term preservation test-beds
- and ...

#### **Questions of Content**

- Are the problems the right ones?
- Are the objectives sharp and well defined?
- Will it have an impact?
- Are the desired results evident?
- Are the users involved?
- Does it have a clear EU focus?
- Is the challenge a global one?

#### **Questions of Context**

- Will these mobilise the right actors?
- What role “take-up” and accompanying measures in developing critical mass?
- Who should we target and how?
- What policy links need to be reinforced?
- Which alliances to target and how?
- What next: Work Programme 2001?

#### **Opportunities:**

- develop new people-focused services
- economies of scale through collaborative approaches
- added-value content - new opportunities for its exploitation
- alliances - within the cultural area, with industry and private sector partners, with education
- improve visibility & accessibility of Europe’s heritage



# *The role of the Public Library in Democracy and Citizenship*

**Breda Karun,**  
**Deputy Director,**  
**Library Otona Zupanica,**  
**Ljubljana, Slovenia**

Democracy, citizenship, human rights - big words used so often in many situations, but not always with awareness of their meaning. They are written down in all our constitutions and are a crucial part of many laws.

But what happens in real life? Let me tell you a true story which happened a month ago.

The library I work in is one of the training centres designated by PubliCA. In order to attend, one of the participants left her country for the first time in her life and travelled to Ljubljana by train. She had to cross some borders and at one of them she had a horrible experience:

In the middle of the night a customs officer pushed her out of the train even though all her documents were in order. He refused to explain to her what was wrong and what she would have to do to resume the journey. He did not want to talk at all and he did not allow her to use the telephone. His treatment was insolent and violent. Then he took her into an empty room and made her wait. After some hours he came with an offer: he would let her go if she gave him DM 200, he was even so kind as to offer her a taxi. The woman refused. When she asked what she had done wrong and what laws she had broken, she got the answer: "I am the law here!"

When the next train going in the same direction arrived, he pushed her on and let her go without any explanation or, of course, excuse. Can you imagine the experience this person had, who left her home country for the first time in her life, who kept wondering when she would awake from such a horrible nightmare, only to realise that it will always be in her memory, and can never be erased?

But that was not the worst of it. When she finally got to Ljubljana, we called the embassy of her country located in the country where all this happened. Can you believe that they answered that it is perhaps wise to have some money for such situations, just in case!

Can you understand her fear of going back?

Stories like this one happen all the time, in all parts of the world. In some countries the government permits them, in others they are hidden. But they occur, even in countries with a long democratic tradition. In one such country I saw that there was a separate entrance to the public affairs offices for immigrants. When I asked why, I was told that it was only to help them, that they need special treatment due to language difficulties and inexperience.

Was it really only kindness?

It will take a lot of time and effort on the personal and institutional level to build a world which will allow freedom, equality, individuality and the same opportunities to everyone.

With the co-operation of all institutions, with the government at the top, it will be possible to create a society in which there will not be a place for violence or if there is, people will be able to defend themselves from it.

Is it too conceited to say that public libraries are places which are democratic by themselves, and at the same time offer an environment which stimulates personal development? Who creates democracy if not cultivated, responsible and informed individuals?

The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status.

The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto says: "Freedom, Prosperity and the Development of society and individuals as a fundamental human rights will only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in the society. The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development for individuals and social groups."

Public libraries have a variety of means at their disposal to stimulate democratic processes and most importantly, besides schools, they are institutions which are visited sooner or later by almost each citizen from childhood until old age.

The basic function of a public library is to collect, process, offer for use and preserve publicly available material no matter what form it is packaged in. The material is accessible for all users and the library has facilities for using the new media. The documents containing information on government decisions on the municipal and national level are one of most important and frequently used parts of a library's collection. Librarians are guides through the mass of information, assistants in using the technology and counsellors for defining the right questions to get proper answers.

Public libraries offer special care for special groups of users: There's no library in the world which would not have a department for children. With a variety of activities they stimulate children's creativity, tolerance and imagination.

Young adults are one of the groups which demand extra careful treatment, but if communication is established they are excellent partners in various projects. Let me mention the debate program in the library I work in, where students learn to defend their opinions and be tolerant of others. They use the library material for preparing debates and perform them sometimes for visitors, and they have even demonstrated a political debate in the parliament.

The unemployed find the library to be a place which enables them to stay connected to active life. They can get information on their social rights, laws and regulations, look for announcements for jobs in newspapers and browse through job links.

Libraries offer various services to the handicapped: reading machines and special computer programs for the visually impaired, talking books for the blind, the delivery of books to people who can not



***Mrs. Breda Karun, Slovenia and Mr. Ramazan Vozga,  
Manager, Library Training Centre, National Library, Albania***

come to the library by themselves, and others.

Lives are getting longer and longer, a lot of retired people still want to be active members of society. Libraries in Slovenia have founded senior clubs, called the University for the third stage of life. Beside other activities, members tell stories to children, offer free study help to youngsters, give legal advice and lectures on various subjects and in this way share their experiences.

In short, each citizen, regardless of age or status, can find a public library to be a place which stimulates personal growth, social awareness and helps realise citizenship.

The case I described above is really an extreme. But there are many situations in everyone's life which demand awareness of our duties and rights. Democracy is a variety of possibilities. It is a personal decision which possibility to choose and

this decision has to be accepted with a high degree of responsibility.

How can we defend ourselves from the inappropriate treatment we might experience in everyday life? Only by being informed, by having clear explanations.

Not being informed can no longer be an excuse.





# *Interacting with Society: Economic and Social Development'*

**Heather Kirby,  
Information Services Manager,  
Croydon Libraries**



## **Where are we? The Public Library in the Community**

All of us here at this PubliCA conference understand that public libraries have an unrivalled position in their communities – they are not just warm, dry and free to enter when the weather gets bad; but also widely trusted, welcoming and sociable; full of enticing leisure and entertainment resources, learning opportunities and wide-ranging information. The public library is a good place to meet but also hospitable to those who are alone. It is for many the first place at which to ask a question, any question, and expect a well-researched, timely answer. In the eyes of most of our users the staff are friendly, approachable and free of the taint of officialdom. They always know where to find out about something and whom to contact. They are endlessly patient in helping users with the computers.

We could each add further values and attributes to this list to illustrate the importance of public libraries to their communities; and the wide recognition of their role and achievements, locally, first and foremost, but also nationally and internationally. Public librarians were sharing knowledge and lending items across the world long before the Internet became the first global network.

This is the broad view of public library endeavour. The work which has been done in Croydon recently is a small part of that picture.

## **Croydon Libraries in the Community**

How have Croydon libraries used their status within the community? Can we feel confident that the library service will be at the centre of Croydon's future?

In this case study I will be highlighting examples from our services to see what we have contributed to life in Croydon, looking in particular at the part Croydon libraries have played in supporting the economic and social development of the

community. These will include the Croydon Online Community Network, which is the foundation for several content and service building initiatives; Cornerstone House and INCH; homework and house bound users; Job Mart and the Business Register.

To set these developments in context we need a brief snapshot of Croydon Libraries and their priorities, to put beside the priorities of Croydon community, as we understand them.

## **A Snapshot of Croydon Libraries**

Croydon has a large central library and twelve small branch libraries. The central library is well known for its IT developments and much visited for these, but also for the exciting architecture and the evolution of the cultural complex in which the library sits: the links between the Museum and Heritage Service, the Arts Service and the Library have enriched all three.

Croydon libraries have a staff of 288, including many who work part-time. The total budget is £4.6 million this year.

The resident population is 336,000 and rising slowly, against the trend in London. It is augmented by a daytime working population of approximately 100,000. 78% of the resident population use the service on a regular basis.

Croydon and business go together; there are more than 9,000 businesses in the area, ranging from micro-businesses to multinational corporations. The Library Service has recognised that the health of the business community and the level of economic activity across the borough are high priorities for Croydon by providing appropriate and imaginative support services.

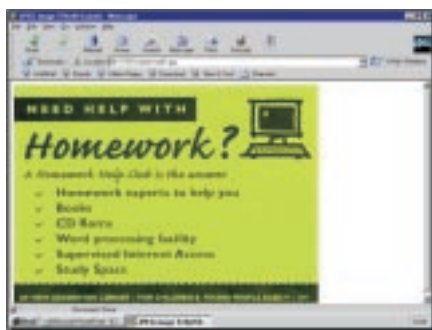
Almost a year ago Croydon Libraries completed a wide area network to connect all thirteen sites, using 2 Mb cable and providing 2 Mb leased line Internet supply to all sites. This was achieved through a grant from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport/Wolfson Public Library Challenge Fund. Until that

### **Snapshot of Croydon Libraries**

- Large central library + 12 small branches
- 288 staff; budget of £4.6 million
- Resident population of 336,000 and a large daytime work population
- Croydon and business go together
- Wide area network to all sites: cable and 2 Mb leased line Internet

### **Croydon Online Community Network**

- Web Site is the hub of the Community Network
- Providing:
  - Information and Email
- Building:
  - New resources and new services
- Encouraging:
  - Ownership and participation



time we had been extending the networked services gradually, as we could afford it, by prioritising our general budgets. This special opportunity enabled us to move forward quite quickly to the stage of being ready to use this infrastructure as a launch pad for building and providing new services and resources; and reaching new audiences through this process.

### **Priorities for Croydon Libraries**

#### **Community role**

One of the aims of the service has been to take the library out into the community, to a greater extent than ever before, and to try to meet the needs identified in the community. It is a new emphasis rather than a new direction; one that takes us far beyond the fulfilment of the statutory obligation to provide a free library service, inspiring new initiatives to enable everyone in the community to join the mainstream of the information society. This work has of course raised expectations which are sometimes a challenge to meet but the policy driving it recognises not only the potential of the library as the lynch pin of the local information exchange, but also its strength as an agent of change within the community. The public library can do so much just because it is a universally trusted organisation.

Much of what we have created recently in developing Croydon's library service has been achieved through a growing involvement with local organisations and individuals in all sectors of the community, building partnerships and opening up the processes to greater community participation.

#### **Lifelong Learning Support**

Opening up a range of learning opportunities in Croydon Libraries, in response to a growing demand, has chimed with new government policies and funding stimuli. Open Learning services, using computer-based packages for independent and flexible learning, have been widespread in English public libraries for some years. Today many libraries provide

a variety of informal learning opportunities, from Book Start for babies to support for the University of the Third Age programmes. Several of Croydon's new services will be described in this paper.

#### **ICT Development**

Croydon libraries have for many years been committed to developing new information and communications technology (ICT). Within the UK Croydon has been at the forefront of several innovations, such as CD-ROM networking and the introduction of public Internet services. Realising the potential of a modern ICT infrastructure for the community, we have worked hard to achieve this. We are therefore in a good position to join the New Library Network and contribute to its development; in particular, by offering information and the benefit of our experience to other library authorities that may be less advanced in this aspect of library development.

#### **Staff Training and Commitment**

A vision for development and the finance to implement it, will not go very far without staff commitment and a good basis of skills and knowledge. Croydon Libraries have submitted an outline proposal to the New Opportunities Fund Call for Library Staff Training; we hope to be accepted to start a training programme for 188 staff next April. This is a unique opportunity to provide independent learning and training in ICT for all library staff, over a period of eighteen months. The funding estimated for Croydon Libraries is tenfold what we are able to allocate to training each year. In order to meet the funding criteria we are required to have a good plan for this training, together with an ICT strategy and we have just established a Working Group on Learning and Training opportunities in Croydon Libraries. It is intended that this group should later broaden its remit to cover user education and the wider participation in informal learning that we offer to everyone in the borough through the library service.

Historically our early introduction of IT facilities enabled us to begin to build staff commitment and interest in the user benefits of such services. The process was so gradual that we have never had any great technophobia to dispel and there has always been considerable enthusiasm and demand from staff for more facilities, a trend which has matched the spiral of demand from the public.

#### **Priorities for Croydon Community**

Croydon Libraries' links and contacts in all sectors of the community are growing steadily, thus strengthening our knowledge and understanding of the needs of the community, for library resources and services which will support and enhance the quality of life for everyone who lives, works, studies in or visits Croydon.

The area of education and training has always been very important but new government policies and initiatives have raised its profile dramatically in the last two years. Croydon Libraries are working hard to meet the demand, with innovative services which will contribute to the establishment of Croydon as a Learning City, in which everyone can access formal or informal learning opportunities, throughout their lives.

New networks have given Croydon Libraries new opportunities to contribute to the borough's initiatives in supporting the business community and assisting employment. Good ICT facilities have also enabled the library service to develop new networks in the field of health and social care. This will be illustrated in one of the examples in this paper.

#### **Croydon Online Community Network**

The hub of the network is the Croydon Online web site, through which the library service is providing information and e-mail communication; building new resources and services; and encouraging wide ownership and participation from within all sectors of the community.

One of the most important aspects of the vision for Croydon Online has always been its "something for everyone" nature. We did not want it to be seen as a Council web site, but rather as a site and network embracing all sectors of the community, of which the Council is a very important part, but only a part. The philosophy behind this vision was to stimulate collaborative building and sustaining of the resource through a shared identity, ownership and therefore, responsibility.

Our progress in promoting this vision has been slow, in the face of ignorance and some self-interest and fear from colleagues within the Council. Fortunately our aims and work have been supported by some officers, and very generously by our contacts in other organisations across the borough. We continue to hold fast to this vision of the future of Croydon Online. The technology offers an excellent opportunity to build a unified, shared service which can work for all interests across the borough. Croydon does not need yet another series of unrelated developments competing with each other.

The use of the data and services offered by Croydon Online has spread and increased since we were able, as part of the Wolfson project, to complete Croydon Libraries' network infrastructure, providing free and stable Internet access in all thirteen sites. The profile of the service was raised and within a short time, all public Internet services were booked a week in advance. As part of this project we carried out an intensive staff training programme and a series of introductory programmes for users of the new services.

In parallel with the above promotion work, the Croydon Online Research Project, funded by the British Library Research and Innovation Centre (now part of the Library and Information Commission), was carrying out an intensive survey of the awareness and use of Croydon Online. Some of the results are informing new developments and establishing community priorities for the future. One result was very clear: as with our other services, an enthusiastic response was creating a new spiral of demand for further development and wider access to the resource.

### **Community Access**

Spreading information about Croydon Online has stimulated an encouraging, if numerically small, number of requests for connection, including of course help with

the costs of the set up phase. If it seems desirable to outside organisations, then perhaps we have got some of it right, including perhaps the content priorities.

Once again the Wolfson Project, which has enabled Croydon Libraries to move forward with many strands of their ICT development, made it affordable to begin the spread of access to the network by establishing a few pilot sites, some of which are described below.

Two large sites in the voluntary sector were connected, one of them an umbrella organisation, Croydon Voluntary Action, which could open it up to several hundred of their member organisations; and the other, a host for a number of tiny groups in Cornerstone House.

Other sites included Health Centres, Job and Training Centres. Here as in the voluntary sector, the enthusiasm grew during the project, giving rise, for example, to a proposal to establish a Croydon-wide adult education and training centre network through the library and able to share some additional services. The success of the pilot connection, in this sector especially, has brought new energy to some of the Education and Library partnerships.

In other areas there is also evidence of great interest and enthusiasm to inspire us to carry on the work of developing the network.

### **Cornerstone House**

This is a two-storey building which gives tiny office space to the organisers of 25 local community groups, that look after the interests and needs of minorities with physical, social and language difficulties, for example: Asian Women's Conference; Before and After Dark (Women's Safe Transport); Each One Teach One; Croydon Community Mediation Project.

We networked the whole building as part of the Wolfson Project, giving every office leased line Internet access, as well as connecting the communal meeting spaces. When we invited the group organisers to visit the Central Library for demonstration and talk sessions we were delighted at their keen interest and ability to grasp the possibilities for their work and the benefits which ICT would offer to their members. Learning to use the Internet and having some computer skills could enable some of their members to join the mainstream of society; perhaps get a job and gain some self-confidence. This in turn might encourage some of

them to take up other opportunities to learn and train, or at least want to have their share of the rich multimedia resources which are available in the libraries.

The manager of the centre was eager to revolutionise the way he works, by creating e-mail lists, electronic discussion groups and online booking of the meeting spaces. He is also interested in a further project to provide small group training in Cornerstone House, to introduce basic ICT skills to all the group members.

The success of this community site creates for Croydon Libraries a new imperative: we must find a way of spreading networked access to many other sites, where similar organisations are working hard to overcome inequalities within our society.

### **Homework Help Clubs**

Two Homework Clubs have been established so far and both are proving very popular. Each one has a dedicated area in the open plan library, with computers, printers, scanners, supervised Internet access, CD-ROM network and word processing and spreadsheet packages. Two Homework Helpers are available to encourage and guide users. One of these clubs was set up with commercial sponsorship, and the other through joint funding by the Education Action Zone with the library; both providing good models for future social and educational partnerships.

We would like to set up several more clubs in our libraries as these two are so well-used and enjoyed. They are much more than just an educational add-on. Their social function is very clear in the quotation below, from a very enthusiastic young child in New Addington, an area of Croydon which has high unemployment and some problems arising from social deprivation. Here there are households in which it is undoubtedly difficult to find room and an atmosphere conducive to study, so the library enables some children to work and study well who would not otherwise have a good opportunity to do so. The Club patrons also seem to enjoy doing their homework in the company of their peers and they often help each other as well as turning to the adult helpers.

### **A Homework**

#### **Help Club User said:**

"Interacting with Society: economic and social development" *I like coming to the*



*Homework Club because it's more fun and there's good computers to use and someone helps you with the computer.*

[ 8 year old boy in New Addington]

### **House Bound User Group**

The idea for this project, which was also funded within the Wolfson Project, grew out of discussions with the staff who run the House bound Library Service. We were all aware that many of their regular users were eager to learn but felt that there were no opportunities open to them in the field of ICT and Internet in particular. It seemed an exciting idea to explore the potential of providing access to the network: would it enable any of the members of the group to gain new skills, to make new contacts and increase their knowledge in areas of special interest? Would this experience help us to develop a service which catered for special needs in using ICT?

The Group comprised fourteen members, between the ages of 45 and 89. None of these people had ever used the Internet and 50% of them had never used a computer. They were however volunteers who responded to a leaflet drop to all our house bound library users and they were eager to try.

Each of them was given a new personal computer, small printer, modem and six-month dial-up Internet account. The first task for the two staff who managed this part of the project, was to get them set up comfortably and liven up the network connections. Then began the intensive process of one-to-one training and familiarisation which is applauded in one of the quotes below. Throughout the project there was constant e-mail and telephone contact, but some of the group needed fairly frequent personal visits to sort things out and sustain their confidence. The results were outstanding, a measure of the quality of the support, but also a tribute to the determination of the group members. They sent back diary sheets, regular e-mails to the support staff, as well as to the group list, and explored energetically.

### **HUG Outcomes**

The group members became new, enthusiastic users of ICT: they exchanged URLs with each other by e-mail; searched the library's OPAC; e-mailed their requests to the House Bound Service. They also made many new contacts for their own topics of interest; worked through

Croydon Online and provided the Research Officer with a clear critique of it as a resource for someone with a mobility problem. Some of the group used e-mail to contact politicians, at which point we crossed our fingers that nothing would rebound on Croydon Libraries via our Council Members.

In summary they enjoyed this learning exercise enormously, evincing along the way a great sense camaraderie within the group, none of whom were acquainted before the project began. A raft of jokes grew around the acronym of the group. At least one of the members has used this new competence to embark on an Open University course and we would like to develop the project to explore distance learning opportunities which could be made available through new partnerships with the library.

### **A HUG member said:**

*Thank you again for introducing me to the Big Wide World... I can now go anywhere I like, whenever I like... no passport controls, no waiting around in the airport, no travel fatigue....*

### **Another HUG quote:**

*You will never know how grateful I am for this opportunity to learn with patient teachers... One of my friends, a very clever lady, is still making a dog's dinner of her e-mails, so I am optimistic....*

### **INCH Information Network for Croydon Health**

This project provides a further example of content-building initiatives which have become feasible since Croydon Libraries consolidated Croydon Online and completed the network infrastructure for the library service. It also demonstrates the value to the community of a cross-sectoral development in an information field that most people need frequently in their daily lives. Behind the success of the web site and its management lies a story of great diplomatic effort, needed to accommodate the differing approaches and interests of all the partners, who come from the health, voluntary, statutory and private sectors.

It began with the recognition by three information colleagues that there was a plethora of small information gathering activities happening across the area in the field of health and social care, but little interchange or knowledge of how they overlapped each other, where they could be found, or how they were updated and managed. There was everything from the

notes in the cardboard box upwards, but nothing electronic which was capable of being shared.

It was clear that Croydon needed access to a unified, current, authoritative source of health and social care information. It was agreed, following a wide community consultation and seminar, that Croydon Online offered the best vehicle for creating and delivering this resource. An information mapping exercise began and subgroups were set up to plan the content, develop the site and continue the work of informing groups and individuals to build consensus and support.

The site is growing daily but of course problems arise, for example, it was decided, with our CHA partner, to link directly to the Croydon Health Authority site for the current lists of doctors, dentists etc. No-one ever imagined that this would not be updated, much less that it might be taken off-line for a long period, but Croydon Online receives the unkind comments about listing dead doctors and other sad circumstances.

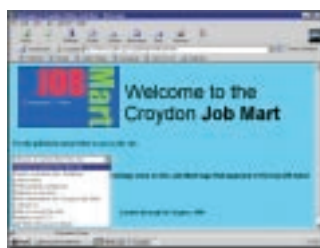
Notwithstanding such difficulties, the resource has become known and respected. Other agencies are queuing up to publish their directories on the site, e.g. Age Concern, which was launched a week ago. They are very enthusiastic about INCH, even if they do manage to "improve" on their web address when they print it on the hard copy version. INCH is reaching the point of needing financial support in order to promote the work and extend the resource, but that will be a matter for a sequel to this outline.

### **Business Support**

It was mentioned earlier that the needs of the business community are very important for Croydon. Croydon Libraries have well-established links and partnerships with some of the other business support agencies in the area and these are growing as our services develop and gain recognition.

### **IBC, Information for Business in Croydon**

This is a specialist service, situated in the Central Library, which has some loyal customers from as far away as Scotland, but deals mainly with businesses in the South East Region. It has a solid reputation for ICT capability and has taken a lead in the CD-ROM network developments and the use of the Internet for business information and related topics.



### **The Business Register**

When it was first developed, it was called the Electronic Business Register, but when a new logo was being designed we realised how old-fashioned the electronic bit of the name sounded today and we changed it. This register of businesses in the local area has grown and become well known in some areas at least – we were approached by a business in Bristol, a couple of hundred miles away from Croydon, wanting to join the register. We said that it was fairly local to Croydon and South London, but they were so pressing, even to the point of claiming that they were considering relocation to this area, that we made an entry for them. It is a free service to all businesses.

### **Croydon Small Business Club**

For several years the Central Library and IBC have hosted this club, making our facilities available and helping to organise events. They appreciate this support and are in turn much consulted on Council economic development and planning projects, as a small business focus group. The relationship has opened up other contacts and partnerships for IBC and the library generally.

### **Job Mart**

A one stop shop on Croydon Online, providing employment opportunities in the local area, was established and launched in April this year, with support from several large organisations in Croydon, including a recruitment agency. They also saw it as a good development, rather than a threat to their livelihood, in that it would co-ordinate as much as possible on one site and be capable of receiving advertisements and supporting documents directly by e-mail, thus saving considerable recruitment costs. The promotion drive to win further companies as subscribers has slowed down recently, due to staff vacancies, but the initial responses suggest that it will be supported in the long term.

As can be seen from the web site, there are very flexible search facilities, and opportunities to build new features which will include a CV database and expanded links to subscribers' web sites for background information. When we launched the service there were none for our area which could offer the number of local jobs, or the range of facilities.

We have several case examples of people using the site successfully from first seeing an advertisement through to accepting the job, with all stages transacted online.

### **Projects, Partnerships and the Future for Croydon Libraries**

That one successful project attracts offers of several others is clear: the difficulty is managing to fit them all in and still run the core services well, given that it is always hard to decline a chance to join an attractive project.

Croydon Libraries does sometimes seem to be involved in very many projects and they are stimulating and motivating for staff. Some of the current partnerships and networks which are running projects with Croydon Libraries' involvement, centre around lifelong learning and business training initiatives. They are frequently linked to regional and national initiatives for project funding. A few examples are mentioned with brief details:

#### **Business Learning Network**

This partnership reaches across two boroughs, with a membership of training and business support organisations, colleges, local authorities and libraries. It enabled Croydon Libraries to equip a training room and start a programme of short ICT courses, which had been suggested and requested by many library users, in partnership with a local training group.

**IT's Easy to Learn Computer Skills** has proved very popular with individuals, whilst the other part of the scheme, **IT's Easy to Get Your Staff Trained** has been drawing in small business groups and is now being extended to cater for larger businesses.

### **Partnership in Learning across Croydon and Sutton**

A group, including local colleges, training centres and libraries, which has been running a project to widen participation in adult learning, has recently bid to manage a large hub within the University for Industry project. Croydon Libraries will have at least one learning centre and several access centres, opening up new resources and funding opportunities to extend the learning services we currently provide. The contacts within this group have enlarged the scope of Croydon Libraries' initiatives in learning and training.

#### **European Projects**

Croydon Libraries will be associated partners in several projects which have not yet been formally established. The online and networking developments of the past year have attracted new credit and acknowledgement, in particular from the business and education sectors. This in turn has brought new offers of partnership and co-operation, which will again enlarge the horizons for Croydon Libraries and stimulate an interest in creating new applications for their information and communications technology. These few developments which I have outlined are just the beginning.



# The new Library needs a new Attitude

**Frans Meijer,**  
Director, Rotterdam Public Library



Since 1995 I have been the Director of the Rotterdam Public Library. I am not a librarian as my profession. Till four years ago I was an engineer and I have worked for a long time in public housing and urban renewal in Rotterdam. I am convinced that my background, of an outsider, is an advantage for the modernisation of the library work.

In my four years in the library I have changed my management team completely. Now half of the management of the Rotterdam Library is non-librarian. In my opinion if you want to renew your library work, start by renewing the mentality and the attitude of your staff.

I have been asked to tell you some issues about the educational task of the Rotterdam Library. I feel free to give you some headlines about our situation on the educational, the multicultural and the cultural issues. In my opinion, these are in fact almost the same issue.

In the Netherlands we have nearly 16 million inhabitants and four big cities: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag and Utrecht. Rotterdam is the second city with a population of 600,000 inhabitants. In the whole region around Rotterdam we find 1.2 million people. In Rotterdam we have now 22 branch libraries, spread over the whole city, all equipped with an Internet connection for the public. The last eight years we have renewed and restyled more than half of these 22 branch libraries. And in the next years we will go on with this renewal of the very important infrastructure for the Rotterdam Library.

The Main Library was built in 1983 and is situated in the middle of the city centre. And besides that we have two busses, bookmobiles, specially for the elementary schools.

Our strategy is that the Main Library and the 22 branch libraries are the two complementary pillars of the whole institute. In this table you can see what the differences are and how these two pillars need each other. The Main Library cannot exist without the branches and vice versa.

Some facts and figures show how important the library is in the society: 25 % of the Rotterdam population is a member of our library. In total we have 4 million visitors every year, 2 million in the Main Library and 2 million in all the branches together. And we have 5 million loans a year. (2/3 in the branches; 1/3 in the Main Library).

In 1997 we reorganised the structure of the staff, in total equalling 290 full-time posts. We started by reallocations in our total budget of 42 million guilders:

- an education department
- a section of Internet editors
- Public relations section
- Rotterdam Information Desk (for city council information)
- A new function of special librarians for specific groups

In general we can say that after the reorganisation in 1997 there was a new starting point. We started an Open Learning Centre in the Main Library, and in a short time we will start such centres as well in 2 of the branches. Now we give much advice to the higher schools on their new school libraries ('mediatheken'). We have opened a special web site ('B-wise') for a top ten of books for children by using a chat box. Last year we started courses in the use of Internet for the general public and for children as well. In our own Theatre we have some 200 performances about literature, music and other cultural events. And the last two years we have had a huge party for our readers on a Saturday evening in November for 3,000 people on four stages with many authors. My conclusions are:

- give the library a position at the centre of society;
- start pilots for experiments and search new ways (trial and error);
- transform the classical library work to a modern information centre, an educational service centre and a cultural (multi) meeting centre;
- and last but not least: for a new position of the public library, it is also necessary to renew the attitude and mentality of the library staff.

## Central Library as compared to Branch Libraries

Central Library	Branch Libraries
60 (+4 on winter sundays) opening hours per week	17-24 weekly hours open 300 - 1,500 square metres
special departments up to scientific level (multilingual)	library work to increase collections & services adapted to local needs & circumstances
electronic media e.g. CD-ROM, CD-I, online databases, Internet	reading activities programmes both for children/young people and teenagers/adults
information local • culture • education general public, youth, students	loans information important increasing - ) - ) loans - ) children/youth (schools) elderly/immobile people ethnic/cultural minorities
special collections • Erasmus Collection, manuscripts, classical children's books etc. • Rotterdam Collection • video's, CDs	- min 3 school class visits of Library for all 4-12 year olds - school class lending by 75% (over 4-5 weeks 20-30 groups per branch Library) - Basic Education Courses for adults/teenagers





# Culture and Linguistic Diversity

**Tuula Haavisto,**  
**CECUP Project Manager**



Public libraries are in most local communities the most international and multicultural points of their environment! Where else you can find so much fiction and non-fiction literature, journals and papers, in best cases also music and videos in original and in translated versions?

If the wanted item is not included in the own collection of the library in question, it can be inter-loaned from which-ever other library in the world.

The Internet has multiplied this element in library work: if the library offers access to the Internet, it can offer still more possibilities for those who are interested in any culture or language – this is true in spite of the dominance of English on the Internet.

This is in line with the interests of users: they travel more and more, they work abroad from time to time, they attend foreign education institutions, they have contacts to different countries via NGO's or as individuals. All in all, the citizens need support for their internationalisation.

At the same time there is a growing non-voluntary emigration towards Europe or even inside Europe from countries in economical or political difficulties. These immigrants need library services as well, first of all their own journals and papers.

The present situation is challenging libraries to new developments in addition to their traditional strong areas.

## **Case Finland – a Newcomer in Multicultural Services**

Finland was for a long time a very homogenous country. We had three traditional minorities, the Swedish-speakers, the Samish people and the gypsies. The position of especially the first mentioned has been good. The bilingual policy of Finland has even been used as an example of a successful one. This can be seen in libraries, too. The Library Act orders that communities with a bilingual status (Finnish/Swedish or Finnish/Samish) must

serve both language groups on equal terms. The state subsidiary basis for libraries in bilingual communities takes into account this fact.

From the 70s on we have received new ethnic groups. The first groups were Chilean and Vietnamese refugees. The amount of people with a non-Finnish background is still only 80,000 with a total population of Finland of more than 5 million.

The general immigrant policy in Finland as well as in all Nordic countries is ambitious: to support their own culture and to integrate them into our societies at the same time.

## **Helsinki City Library's Central Multicultural Library Service**

Helsinki City Library's Central Multicultural Library Service was begun in 1995. It was built up according to models in other Nordic countries, where this kind of service has much longer traditions. It is run by Helsinki City Library, which receives special Government subsidy for the purpose.

Central Multicultural Library Service serves the entire country with its acquisitions, collection and staff. Its aims are:

- to enhance library services for foreigners
- to establish connections with domestic and international organisations
- to provide information and guidance
- to purchase material in rare languages for interlibrary use for the minorities in Finland.

Still, local municipalities in Finland are for their part also responsible for providing library services for the foreigners. Especially the acquisition of newspapers and periodicals are considered to be their task.

The Central Multicultural Library Service collection is open to everybody, you can find it in the Helsinki City Main Library. This is because 50.000 of our 80.000 foreigners live in Helsinki region and have easy access to it.

A special characteristic of the Central Multicultural Library Service is heavy use of the possibilities offered by new information technology. Also in this field, an inter-Nordic co-operation begun as early as 1996. The background was that *serving multicultural populations is quite the same work in all the countries and it demands a lot of staff resources* (how and from where to subscribe to Kurdish papers, or how to catalogue books written in Thai letters?). Could practical knowledge and other professional skills be shared via the Internet? Could something really new be offered to library users via the Internet?

The answer was MultiCultural Library, MCL. It is a net-based service, the goal of which is to make Nordic public libraries, and especially their multicultural services, available to everyone through the Internet. The cultural and information needs of the foreigners living in the Nordic countries are kept in mind particularly.

MCL's main target groups are thus the foreign library customers living in the Nordic countries, or those customers approaching the library through the Internet from all over the world. The aim is to develop the MCL in such a way that those interested can gain access to multicultural knowledge and information through its home pages.

*But MCL is also a tool for librarians.* From MCL-pages a librarian can find different kinds of tools used in Nordic multilingual libraries. Depending on the tool application it can be in English, Finnish, Swedish, Danish or Norwegian. All the joint tool applications are in English. The content of MCL is:

- *Global/ World information page*, which has links to country specific pages which contain information on official as well as cultural www-information.
- *Foreigner-information*, which contains information foreigners should know about Finland whether an immigrant, a refugee or a tourist.
- *Article databases*, which contain articles on multicultural themes - anyone can send articles to MCL -editors.



**Reception at the  
Royal Danish Library**

- *Library information page*
- *Helsinki-Finland information page*

The work is done in Finland, but it is directly available for other Nordic countries through the net, and likewise the work done in other Nordic countries is available in Finland.

In time, all the MCL work will form a unified whole, and through the individual aspects forming the whole it is possible to see the great variety of different cultures that the world is composed of. To provide information on the world's various cultures is to defend them at the same time - what better function could there possibly be for the Nordic, or any other, public libraries?

### **Does cultural Diversity reach outside the EU Borders?**

For the end of my presentation I want to raise some questions.

Libraries think traditionally that they are self-evidently an anti-racist and tolerant element in their communities. But has this remained a cliché compared with the present situation? Have we examples of active and future-oriented actions in this field? Maybe some of you have heard about opposite examples in four cities in Southern France, where the extreme right-wing party Front National won local elections in the mid-'90s. After that an efficient political wiping got through also to the library shelves, and the first to be excluded were daily papers

from North African countries. Later e.g. fairy tale books with stories from all over the world have been banned. Nowadays educated librarians have left those cities – they could no longer respect themselves as professionals under the circumstances.

The international library community has taken these problems on its agenda. In 1997, IFLA, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, founded an office for enhancing freedom of expression and access to information via libraries. The FAIFE office is located in Copenhagen, thanks to the generosity of the Danish Government and the City of Copenhagen. The work is in its beginning, libraries begin to focus to this topic, too, but we are still lacking concrete examples. In the end this work is done on local level.

EU has also adopted culture and citizenship as important areas of its policy. In culture, multilingual and cultural diversity are important sub-themes. But does this policy cover languages and cultures outside Europe? Does the new Culture 2000 programme recognise the needs of people with non-European backgrounds living and working in Europe?

And what about national library policies and strategies? Recently several such papers have been published or are just now in preparation. In most cases they are inspired by and in connection with national information society strategies. Do they see this user group?



# Summary 1

**Jens Thorhauge,  
the Danish National  
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This conference makes me extremely optimistic. That may make my 5 minutes' remarks a little pathetic - I apologize in advance for that.

And to reveal the question: what is the most impressive thing; what will I remember; what is, from a historical point, the important thing? My answer is: the participants list! Representatives from 31 countries gathered not only on a vision that we share and have shared for many years, but on a very *specific* vision. That is the remarkable thing. I think we all share a vision of an enlightened world. We share an experience - the experience that a door may open to a bigger room and another one and later on yet another one, thus making the world bigger and more enlightened, and we all have the experience especially with books in this role. And most others also with a good teacher, a librarian or a friend. I think that is the basic of the profession on whatever conditions it is run. And we want to share that experience with others - or to use it as a tool.

But we have a more narrow conception here, we have an ideal of what the future public library is. And what makes me optimistic is that actually 5 years ago it would have been impossible to make a conference like this. It would certainly have been impossible 10 years ago, but even 5 years ago, if I may remind you, we discussed library bypass. There was a rather negative atmosphere about libraries. Would they survive in an electronic environment? Actually, we didn't know. And even if some of us believed it, we were quite uncertain.

Many of you here were involved in the PLIS study - the Public Libraries and Information Society study that was the first work package of PubliCA - which was published in 1997 but was written in 1995 and 1996. I had the happy experience to conduct that study. I remember when we set up the vision, the basic vision, which is today self-evident, but we were quite uncertain that it was the right vision. We set up the vision of an updated library

in every European community. We could see this updated library as excellent examples throughout Europe - but very, very few. A ridiculous minority compared to the 40,000 libraries in the European Union at that moment. And since then Europe has become bigger. It has even more libraries.

I will remind you of what the basic vision was at that time, the vision we were uncertain of. It was a library that offers access to the human record in whatever form it might be stored; which is pointing to cultural heritage and cultural diversity. It was a lending collection of printed and digitised media. It offers access to networks and support for net navigation information searching Workstations for customers - I might add today: *good* workstations for customers; that is quite important. And good networks. Open learning and training opportunities; a physical place offering various meeting facilities; electronic documents delivery services; and we pointed out that the updated library will be part of a worldwide library network; it will co-operate closely with other educational and memory institutions; it will be a community information provider and will offer special services to various user groups.

You might see that what is not stressed here is the role of libraries in relation to democracy. But that is stressed in the Copenhagen Declaration. My point is that at this time this was not self-evident - only to a small group. And it is not self-evident today in the sense that we haven't realised this, but it is more or less self-evident as what we are aiming at and that has happened within two or three years. That is incredible! That is really incredible. And it makes an extremely optimistic position for public libraries, I think.

So what we are about to do when we agree on the agenda is to extend it even more. And that is what we are going to do with the Copenhagen Declaration, which I suppose will be accepted: it makes us move a step further. And that is very important.





**Victoriano Colodron,  
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## Summary 2



What I will try to do is to point out what I have found to be more interesting during the conference, from a Spanish point of view. While doing so I will provide you with very brief information on what's happening now in Spain as regards the promotion of the role of public libraries in the information society. I have selected four issues that have been mentioned by several speakers during the conference, and I will very briefly comment on all of them.

The first one is democracy and citizenship. What I would like to stress about this is something which has been said by different speakers, and it is the idea that one of the most outstanding contributions public libraries can make to the development of a really democratic information society is by helping people to take part in that society in an active way; producing contents, information, knowledge, and not only consuming what has been produced by others.

In this regard some very clear statements have been made during these days. Mrs. Rynänen told us about the increasing attention paid to the democratic aspect of the information society and said that public libraries have been identified as key agents for achieving that. Mr. Shimon highlighted the public libraries' contribution to what he called "a healthy democracy". Mr. O'Mahony explained to us how Irish public libraries are going to provide free access to workstations so that users can create their own content as a way of getting a more participative democracy. And finally Mrs. Karun said that it is individuals - responsible and well-informed individuals - who create real democracy.

The second thing I wanted to emphasize is the need of action at all authority levels, from the local one to the European one, going through regional and national policies and strategies. It was a representative from the local level, Mr. José Carreira Marques, who presented the Portuguese national strategy at this international conference. This seems to me a sign

or of the importance of the commitment to the development of public libraries by municipalities as the direct responsible in most of our countries for the provision of this kind of local services.

Both Mr. Koukiadis and Mr. Trohopoulos from Greece stressed the key role of regions for the development of the information society and the support for public libraries. And this is particularly suitable for a country like Spain with a very strong regional dimension, which is almost a federal country. On the European level of course we have the talks by Mrs. Rynänen and Mr. Smith. From Spain we feel that both the Resolution of the European Parliament and the initiatives taken by the European Commission are highly valuable and useful in order to support national and regional actions. I just would like to mention another key document which has been mentioned this morning, which will be the Council of Europe Recommendation on Library Legislation in Europe.

As for the national level, I would like to make you know what is going on in Spain, because we are just now in a critical moment, and I will tell you why. The Ministry of Education and Culture, through the Directorate General of Books, Archives and Libraries, intends to launch an action plan based on the consideration of public libraries as a gateway to an information society for all. This action plan, which is currently in the process of being defined with precision, *will* reinforce and *will* build on our previous permanent programmes and policies in this matter. I will not go into details describing the different actions and projects comprised in this plan, but I would like to let you know some of its main objectives, so that you get a general idea of what we are planning to do.

First objective is to generate a widespread social awareness about the importance of public libraries at the service of the general public. Second is to raise municipalities' commitment to the development of public libraries. The third

objective is to promote and extend among public librarians the skills and attitudes that are essential for the development of the public libraries in the information era. To demonstrate the potential of public libraries as centres of information by using technologies, and to increase the presence and visibility of Spanish public libraries on the Internet.

When I said that this was a critical moment in Spain, I was talking about happy coincidence and a challenge, because while we were working on this plan just a few months ago, the government announced the preparation for a national strategic initiative for the development of the information society. Now every ministry is being consulted and asked to contribute to this initiative. So we are facing now the challenge to gain an important space in the national initiative for our public libraries plan.

The third topic I wanted to highlight, very briefly, is co-operation, considered as a key tool for public libraries in the information society. It was really interesting to hear how the Irish strategy includes the creation of a national network of public libraries, and how the draft for the new Danish Library Act stresses the need for more co-operation between public libraries.

I would just like to tell you that library co-operation is one of our main concerns and responsibilities at the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture, and we are committed since 1996 to the creation of a solid co-operation platform with regions in matters of public libraries. And this is a specific subject, public library co-operation, that we will discuss in depth next week in the fourth seminar of Public Library Issues in the Nordic Countries and in the Southern Europe, which will take place in Spain.

And finally, mentions to cultural and linguistic diversity made during the conference have been particularly close to our interests and concerns in Spain, both from a national and an international perspective. From a national point of view be-



## Summary 3

**Audrone Glosiene,  
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cause we have of course a common language, Spanish, spoken throughout the country, but we have as well some regional languages and a very rich cultural diversity. And public libraries in our country are getting more and more aware of the contribution and the role they can play in preserving that local and regional diversity and giving access to it, as well as in giving access to foreign cultural wealth.

And from an international point of view I would like to add that one of the most outstanding phenomena of the current globalization process is the constitution of blocks or groups of countries mainly for political, geographical and economical reasons. And public libraries can contribute to develop the cultural dimension of those blocks of countries. Let me tell you about the experience promoted by Spain within what is known as the Iberoamerican Community made up of Spanish speaking and Portuguese speaking countries on the American continent and in Europe, comprising of course Portugal and Spain. Just one year ago we created the Iberoamerican Forum of National Bodies in charge of Public Libraries as a permanent framework for co-operation in the field of public libraries. And different projects have already been defined and launched so that public libraries become active agents in reinforcing the existing cultural and linguistic links in the Iberoamerican Community.

This leads to my final words just to announce to you that we will disseminate the results and the conclusions of this conference throughout the Spanish speaking public library community, as we have been doing in the last years with all the European initiatives like the PLIS study, which we translated into Spanish and distributed widely in the Spanish speaking countries.

Yesterday I promised Jan [van Vaerenberg] to write a poem during the night, but I didn't keep my promise. That is why I would like to start my short summing up with an even shorter story. Once a professor of library and information science asked his doctoral students after they had discussed the low image the libraries had in their country, "What shall we do with the library business, guys?" "Close it!", was the answer of one of the smartest.

Listening to Mr. Ross Shimon's presentation yesterday I thought: is it so indeed that the outside world, and especially the media, start paying attention to libraries when they are being closed or turned into pubs? We professionals working in the library and information business, we know that public libraries are important; that they have potential and power. It is them that we have to - and want to - convince: opinion leaders, media, politicians. And I thought: Isn't that what this is all about?

But I'm also aware that there is another side; there is a mission and a role that libraries themselves have to play and to demonstrate their position acting as real centres of excellence, innovation and dynamism. Coming from the part of the world where we have the painful experience of how easily the public libraries can be ideologically indoctrinated and become a tool in the hands of politicians, we have a real concern about transforming public libraries into democratic, open, multicultural and multifunctional institutions, how to safeguard their role as providers of free and equal access to information, knowledge and experience.

For such a task one certainly needs not only money, but also imagination and inspiration. Exchange of ideas and innovative practices building human and information networks are crucial. Wasn't this conference about that? Therefore I consider this PubliCA Conference an extremely important initiative. During the recent decade Nordic public libraries have become a source of inspiration for many professionals in my country and the entire Baltic region. But also Pan-European initiatives that were mentioned during these days such as Telematics for Libraries Programme, PLIS study, Mrs. Rynänen's work and her own initiative report, PubliCA and other initiatives cannot be overestimated. These are the guidelines and inspiring examples of how public libraries can be revitalised in the Information Society.

I would like to express strong support to the Copenhagen Declaration and high appreciation for PubliCA, organisers, speakers and participants of this conference, as they strengthened my optimism (as well as Jan's) and belief that public libraries are "Something for Everyone". And talking about beliefs. Those of you who have picked up a blue sheet with presentation on Lithuanian public libraries could read - if you have a magnifier, because it was in such a small print - there was a sentence in the end: "If public libraries were not established 100 years ago, we ought to invent them now". I certainly borrowed this from some source that I cannot identify, but when yesterday I read in the booklet on 'Experimental and Development Projects within Aarhus Municipal Libraries' here in Denmark and found the same sentence, I certainly felt that we belong to the same religion. Isn't it what this is all about?

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