The Future(s) of Libraries and Librarianship

EBLIDA Conference 2024

“Charting the future of libraries”
To which problems in society is the library the answer?
Today’s Agenda

1. Framing The “Now”
2. Going More Digital
3. Community Engagement
4. Creating A Culture Of Change
5. Finding New Partners
6. The Library As Space
7. Scenarios
Framing The “Now”
Social Unrest
Polarization and Poverty

Lack of skilled labor force

Growing precariat

15 - 20% of population functional illiterate

Larger gap between information strong and information weak citizens?
Migration
War
Power struggle between elected representatives and economic super structures, e.g. European Union versus Google, Amazon, Apple, etc.

Political decisions has unintended side effects

Formal opportunities for participation increased but what about the experience of influence?

Nearby Democracy: Influence on own life
Social media increasingly influencing public opinion
Misinformation and disinformation spreading

- Social media increasingly influencing public opinion
- Misinformation and disinformation spreading
Young People’s Views

- Demand for action and visible change
- Easy access to information
- Representative democracy slow
- Frustration – “Democracy is for loosers”
- Zapper culture – attention span deficit

S. Hansen (2021): Young Voices In The Digital Democracy”, DJOF.
Middle aged cis-gender white male regime
Cynical power struggle
Low trust in governance and public institutions
2

Going More Digital
Libraries of the Industrial Age

Democracy
Free and equal access to information

+ Education
Support to the formal education system

+ Culture
Access to cultural heritage and experiences

= Success
60 -70 % of population users
Change in Framework

**Media Development**
- Internet-based media
- Social media
- Decline in loans of physical materials
- Increase in digital loans

**Resource Strain**
- Cut-backs
- New Tasks
- Reach Non-users

**New User Needs**
- Media Literacy
- Reading Skills
- Life-long Learning
- Community

**New Opportunities**
- Digitisation
- Digital Services
- Space As Service
- Citizen Involvement
The Fight for Attention

Credit: Mikkel Christoffersen, Copenhagen Public Libraries
Access – first level digital divide
Skills – second level digital divide
Outcomes – third level digital divide

Lutz, C (2019). Digital inequalities in the age of artificial intelligence and big data
A **connected** citizen is an **empowered** one.
Put A Human Face On The Library

Libraries are made of humans

Our community should know

Photo by Aarhus Public Libraries
Increase Public Involvement

Digital media affords participation and is democratizing – gives reach of voice

Reading Ambassadors

Materialer

KNIVES

STEMME

JERN

PROVEN
Ask and Listen

Our Online community is out there

What is important to them?

And what are they saying about the library?

Free online survey tools

www.questionpro.com

docs.google.com/forms

www.surveymonkey.com
Encourage Patrons To Interact
Community Engagement
Erosion Of Civic Engagement

From
Informing
Giving Access To Information
Alienation To Politics
Passive Consumers Of Democracy
Eroding Social Capital
"Their Problem"
Expert Domain
Concerns

To
Involving
Facilitating Exchange And Sharing
Civic Engagement
Active Participants
Building Social Coherence
"Our Problem"
Public Domain
Opportunities

The Cure?
To which problems in society is the library the answer?
To which opportunities in the community is the library the catalyst?
Focus on deficiencies, problems

Creates “client” mentality

Outsiders, not community members

Influential institutions retaining “deficiency” model

Focus on survival, not serious change or community development
Asset-Based Community Development

Significant community development happens when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort – it’s never built from the top down, or from the outside in.
Traditional citizens engagement:
- Citizens cooperation
- Duty-driven and dull
- User driven innovation
- Co-production
- Hearings and formal
denomination

Sherry Arnstein, 1969
Level of Engagement

Inform | Consult | Involve | Collaborate | Empower

IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum (2006)
Asset-based Approach

Local community members committed to efforts

Community members “contributors” not “clients”

Assets = Individuals, Associations, Institutions
Conversations

Get out of the library
Meet people where they are most comfortable
Start with small activities
Hold back on own ideas, knowledge, experiences
Workshops
“World Café”
Community Events
Grow! Your Library

Photos by Aarhus Public Libraries
Grow! Your Library
Sustainable Goal Lab
Creating A Culture Of Change
Reinvent the library
new ways of professionalism
new products
new alliances
new ways of funding
MONEY
MONEY
The public sector is in a state of permanent crisis, and the fight on resources is intense…

No more money - probably less!
A Culture Of Change
But how?
Cycle of Human Centered Design

- Observation
- Idea generation
- Testing
- Prototyping

Rolf Hapel – Information School UW
Finding The Right Problem
Vision Creating
User Involvement
Ideation
Building Prototypes
User Testing
Usability Testing
Co-Design
Focus Groups
Design Thinking

Clarke, Rachel Ivy: Design Thinking, (Library Futures Series, Book 4.) ALA, 2020

Design Thinking for Libraries – A Toolkit for Patron-Centered Design. 2015
Http://designthinkingforlibraries.com
Finding New Partners
Therefore Partnerships

New resources and skills in the library
Knowledge and inspiration from others
Increased network
Increased diversity and quality in service production
Enhanced communication and marketing
Legitimazy
New ambassadors
+130 Partnerships

Architects Academy
Childrens Culture House
Chesshouse Aarhus
Danish Authors Association
Farthers Playground
Peoples University
Classical Listerners Club
Pokemon Club
Promenade Orchestra
Save the Children Youth
Causes that Unite
Song Power
Write Your Life Story
Genealogical Association
Students Council Juridical Aid
Wild About Words (Literature)
The Word School (Dyslectics)
NOTA (Dyslectics)
The primary schools (Early literacy)
Aarhus Movie Workshop
etc...

Photo by Aarhus Public Libraries
One week - 42 activities mostly done in partnership!
The Library As Space
“The paramount political question today is how spaces can be created in which citizens can discover their capacity to respond to or generate change”.
—Hal Saunders, International Institute for Sustained Dialogue
Social Infrastructure

Foundational services and structures that support the quality of life of a nation, region, city or neighborhood. This includes any infrastructure that goes beyond basic economic functions to make a community an appealing place to live.
Social Infrastructure

“..shared spaces shape our interactions.”

The Versatility Of Library Spaces

Critical, yet undervalued?
## Library Spaces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information that Can Be Found Anywhere</td>
<td>What Can Only Be Experienced in the Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaces for Media</td>
<td>Spaces as Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line</td>
<td>On Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Meaning and Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facts</td>
<td>Credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Information</td>
<td>Meeting People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing</td>
<td>Experimenting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visitor</td>
<td>Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriousness</td>
<td>Sense of Humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arranged events</td>
<td>Things That Happen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Credit: Ivar Moltke, Create
The “Third Space”

- Safe
- Close By
- Inviting
- As Long As You Want
- Relevant
- Free
Social vs. Communal
Designed For Programming

Flexible
Open
Multi Usable
Easy To Set Up
Self Service
Supported By Tech
Social And Communal

Social space

Communal space

Photo by Aarhus Public Libraries
Social Capital

Bridging

Bonding

Public Speaking
Self Organizing

Photo by Aarhus Public Libraries
Start-Up Convenings
Song And Music
Children’s Theater

Photo by Aarhus Public Libraries
Lectures

Photo by Aarhus Public Libraries
Studies

Photo by Aarhus Public Libraries
“Coding Pirates”
Experiments
Safe Spaces For Everyone

Photos by Aarhus Public Libraries
Digital Components in the Spaces
Old School Arcade Game

Photo by Aarhus Public Libraries
Annie anbefaler

Tomtebiller og dansemus
af Karen Marie Bille & Mette Værna Wegloot

Få sved på panden og hop, syng, dans og leg.
Sangbogen og cd'en indeholder 15 sange med sjove og motorisk udfordrende melodi.
Start dagen med sangen "Godmorgen lille fodd"...
Fredag den 2. oktober kl. 15-15.45 i Store sal.
Gratis og for alle - kræver ikke tilmelding.

Oplev Aarhus Symfoniorkester optræde i et mindre ensemble med populære klassikere med en Strengorkester i spidsen.

FYRAFTENSKONCERT
Med denne App kan du få spænding ind i din lebeur. Hent den ned til din smartphone og lad dig følge af lyst!

Zombies run!
Interactive Screens
Libraries are low intensive meeting places and creators of social capital and trust.

Ragnar Audunson, Oslo University College, Library and Information Studies, Oslo, Norway
Future Scenarios
Library As Privacy Protector?

- AI, robotics, and algorithms
- Permanent record of everyone
- Facial and pattern recognition
- Spy agencies gone rogue
- Secret wars and policies
- Social media increasingly influencing public opinion
- Misinformation spreading
- Trust in governance and public institutions record low

Librarian:
- Privacy Activist
- Big data and Algorithm Educator
- Fact-Finder
- Revealer of Misinformation Strategies
- Facilitator of Digital Literacy
Library As First Responder?

- Post-industrialism total
- Social unrest
- Wealth accumulated on still fewer hands
- Middle classes impoverished
- Social infrastructure weak
- Precariat exploded
- Work: Most manufacturing, service, and highlevel symbol analysis jobs gone

Librarian:
- First Responder
- Social Constructivist
- Liaison Organizer
- Community Activist
Scenario: Library As Innovation Hub?

Librarian:
- Facilitator of Innovation Processes
- Networker and Convener
- Design and Innovation Coach

List:
- AI, robotics, and algorithms
- Inequity and social injustice in society
- Wealth unevenly distributed
- Climate changes posing enormous challenges
- Huge need for innovation on all levels
- Work: Precariat, service jobs, and high level symbol analysis
Library As Democracy Lab?

- Civic participation at an all-time low
- Processes of engagement in society often hollow
- For many people politics sucks
- Democracy seems overrated
- A longing for "strong men" and simple solutions

Librarian
- Organizer of Democratic Debate
- Facilitator of Civic Discourse
- Enabler of Civic Literacy
- Community Engagement Champion
- Civility Advocate
Library As Sustainability Advocate?

- Climate changes posing enormous challenges
- AI, robotics, and algorithms
- Wealth unevenly distributed
- Need for innovation on all levels
- Work: Precariat, service jobs, and high-level symbol analysis

Librarian:
- Sustainability Champion
- Facilitator of Innovation Processes
- Networker and Convener
- Design and Innovation Coach
Library as Enabler Of Meaning In Life?

- AI, robotics, and algorithms
- Wealth more evenly distributed
- Universal basic income
- Taxation on capital gain
- Climate healing
- Sustainable energy provision
- Work: high level symbol analysis and service

Librarian:
- Storyteller
- Literature and Art Specialist
- Play Coach
- Design Trainer
- Tranquility and Meditation Expert
“There shouldn’t be some grand, exalted vision of the library's future—there should be myriads of them”.

Joe Janes, Associate Professor, UW iSchool. In Publishers Weekly, 2019