Proposal FOR CREATIVE EUROPE
Priority: Small scale cooperation projects

Title: New challenges for public libraries

Key words

1. Public libraries
2. Social inclusion and audience development
3. Cross-fertilisation with cultural and creative industries

Working title: New challenges for public libraries

Objectives
To set up transnational models to develop and test innovative, sustainable and effective solutions for public libraries, facing the information society challenges, for a better participation of all social groups, actors and users in the design and delivery of the services, starting from the local community needs and in partnership with cultural and creative industries.

Why public libraries
Public libraries, which are deeply rooted in the European history of cities, communities and rural lives are undergoing a profound change due to the "dematerialisation" of the book, development of the Web, and rapidly evolving information technologies.

In many communities around Europe libraries are still the only place where a person, regardless of education or skill level, can have access to information; for the economic crisis, libraries services have been severely hit because of budgetary cuts.

While the supporters think that the traditional book remains however important, in face of the need to expand digital services, many, also among the policy makers, seem to consider its role nearly exhausted.

The discussion focuses not only on the economic sustainability of the library services, often underutilised, but even on the identity of the services themselves. The challenges are real, complex, and varied and need new answers which requires new perspectives, tools, and approaches.

How to face the challenges
Both in the U.S. and in Europe, especially in the North, new methodologies and pilot projects have been developed to reinforce and reinvent the role of public libraries as centres for social innovation, rather than books repositories. Human centred innovation is the key word of these new programs, which focuses particularly on the territory, re-evaluating the relationship with the local communities.

The best practices show that libraries and librarians are rising and responding to the challenges, reframing spaces and functions, promoting innovative programs and services. A new audience, "new artisans", artists, cultural and creative industries, are involved and participate in the redesign.

Libraries transform themselves into “hubs” dedicated to services for social inclusion, in co-working spaces, and in platforms for experimentation and social innovative programs.

In accordance with the European Commission’s recommendations (Green Paper of 27 April 2010 – Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries” (COM[2010] 183), libraries can revitalize and renew themselves by matching cultural and creative industries, initiating a cross fertilisation process.
Design thinking processes, that have been successfully exploited in other contexts, efficiently support the challenges facing libraries, allowing to develop innovative, sustainable and effective solutions, starting from the local community needs.

Description of activities
State of the art and best practices - to compare experiences and best practice at transnational level
Methodologies and tools - to analyse the community needs, include new partners and constitute transnational teams to ideate new services supported by design thinking methodologies. Contest and pilot actions - public contest addressed to cultural and creative industries to design the best service ideas (effective, sustainable, innovative). Networking and events: to involve the citizens, chose the best projects and disseminate the results. Policy recommendations and Transnational network between public libraries and cultural and creative industries to capitalize the results for a continuous development of the services.

Envisaged outcomes
Vision - New visions, new functions for libraries and new relationship with the local communities and the cultural and creative industries Reframe public libraries’ services Services Innovative, effective and sustainable transnational programs and services for public libraries. Participation and inclusion new tools and methodologies to increase citizens’ participation and to promote social inclusion, in cooperation with artists and cultural and creative industries Transnational network A solid network between public libraries services and cultural and creative industries. New policies policy recommendation for the future of libraries in the Alpine Space with focus on libraries as “community hubs” for participation and social inclusion.

Methodology
We refer to the “DESIGN THINKING FOR LIBRARIES: A TOOLKIT FOR PATRON-CENTERED DESIGN”, - developed and published by IDEO (http://www.ideo.com) in partnership with the Arhus public library (http://www.nextlibrary.net) - in order to develop new services (or to evaluate the existing services) involving users (especially new user) and CCI.

Please find a paragraph from the introduction of the Toolkit below:

“Design Thinking for Libraries is an approach to improving your library through creative problem solving. This toolkit guides you through Design Thinking so you can start coming up with solutions to everyday challenges within the library. Design thinking, or human-centered design, is all about starting with people — the users that visit your library. At IDEO, we’ve been using similar methods to envision new products, services, spaces, and experiences that bring them to life. We created this toolkit specifically for the library setting, and we’re looking forward to seeing how you might create impact by seeing your work through a fresh perspective: the design thinking lens!”.

Two Universities are involved in the project: Università Politecnico di Milano (design) and the Digital Library of the Università di Milano Bicocca.
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<th>Workpackages first proposal</th>
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<td>WP1  Project management</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>WP2  State of the art and best practices</td>
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<td>WP3 Community needs: inspiration and on field research</td>
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<td>WP5 Networking, communication, events</td>
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<td>WP6 Trasnational network between public libraries and CCI and policy recommendations</td>
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**Partners found**: Consorzio Bibliotecario del Nord Ovest di Milano (lead partner), Università Bicocca (partner)

**Expression of interest from**: Regione Lombardia; Munich, Germany; Local and Regional Studies Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic; Municipality of Treviso

**Partner search**
Public libraries; Universities and research centres (also in the service design field); regional and local authorities; development agencies