

# Build bridges



**Jens Thorhauge  
Danish Agency for  
Libraries and Media**

## We recognize a new medialandscape and a new cultural behaviour

- www, Google, wikipedia, Facebook, twitter, You tube, Flickr .....do not **yet** replace the library but take more and more... 'Google generation' is here- what is after?
- E-readers and digitisation of books may (over years) take over the traditional library role-
- So: media and information everywhere solves the traditional need for 'access to information'
- Consumption of info enormous, superficial, fragmented – 'surfing'- a need to qualify?
- 'Digital gap' overlap to 'social tension'+ postmodern trends
- Traditional library mission under pressure

## We share a vision on the new library

- The library will enrich peoples lives- stick to the idea of equal access as a basic democratic right & prerequisite for enlightened citizens
- The new library is everywhere where citizens are
- Onsite and online it **facilitates** the value adding exploitation of information resources – it still offers quality
- The library place is the attractive place for learning, for inspiration, dialogue and experience for everybody – a place for meeting, the arena for the democratic society? A public sphere with a new significance supporting with knowledge to cope better with life

## We aim at a European policy for the new library

- Integrating the library services in the daily lives of citizens – **value-adding info** a few clicks away
- Developing services supporting the society's agenda – lifelong learning, innovation, coherency, inclusion. 'Cultural activities' part of this
- Reaching out with different offers relevant to the entire population – serve people in their current life-situation

# The new role of libraries

- The open and informal space
- Helping people to help themselves
- The 'third place' free and open to all
- Supporting and partnering with cultural activities, education and training activities in more formal frames
- Experiencing, learning, meeting, relaxing
- The library as citizens' arena in the community- the manifestation and representation of society

# The shift of paradigm is already here

- More and more digital services available everywhere 24/7
- Easy self-service transactions and more and more relational/interactive/dialogue based services – do it yourself or wait or forget
- Innovation is becoming user-orientated
- The library place becomes a space for **people** - not primarily books
- Media and information are everywhere – and free! Changing the library mission ('access') into delivering more complex learning and community building activities and new partnerships
- Individualised services are required along with offers supporting a coherent society

## Libraries try hard to cope with new conditions

- To design services meeting obvious needs and supporting the lives of citizens= national agendas
- The agenda for most European societies are based on the same conditions
  - globalisation – and the need for new types of production and jobs
  - Learning, education, research as the most important factors boosting innovation
  - Activities to support the building of identity and modern citizenship – fighting fragmentation and social tension
  - Fighting tension between ethnic and other groups

## Who are we talking about not being included

- Elderly, poor, poorly educated, illiterate, minorities, children, not-engaged protest voting- and others
- May not have access because of lack of motivation, insight, skills, confidence, money...
- E-access is not the goal – but it may be a step towards a solution –helping them improving their lives
- How many are there? 40%?, 17%?, 20%? 1/3?
- Figures in Europe vary, but they are high all over

## E-competencies the prerequisite for wealth

- E-inclusion becomes crucial for fighting social tension
- Different types of needs should be met with different programmes and offers. Examples:
  - Enabling the elderly to stay active citizens
  - Enabling citizens to cope with constant changes
  - Improving language and reading skills in multicultural populations
  - Computer training programmes as means for integration and inclusion
  - Early stimulation and language training of pre-school children and immigrants

## Best Scandinavian practise

- ICT learning activities standard in public libraries
- A broad variety of services
  - **Instant support** for walk in users- drop in service
  - **Organised classes** on different levels: from very first intro to handling of more complex issues,
  - **National campaigns** in libraries based on national competence developing programmes
    - 'Citizen.dk' – campaign on access to all public info
    - 'Learn more about ICT' –campaign on broadening competencies
  - **Targeted programmes** aiming at children, elderly, multicultural population, professionals- ICT and general literacy

## What should be done on e-inclusion

- Libraries should demonstrate in a convincing way that they are efficient partners in bridging the gap
- Research and evidence on activities
- Service- and competence development programs for librarians should be run – for instance on a national level
- Learning activities for citizens should be implemented in all libraries
- Service should be available onsite and also online support – flexible offers like mobile learning labs
- Proper programmes with ambitious and measurable goals nationally

## To reach the vision

Strong, wealthy and including democratic societies building on literate citizens and offering the frames for development and innovation for all.