Library Buildings and Equipment and Libraries for Children and Young Adults,

Open Session in Milan, Monday August 24, 2009, 13.45-18.00, Room Red

If I was the director

The session was opened by the chairs of the two sections: **Karen Latimer** for the Section Library Buildings and Equipment and **Ingrid Bon**, Section Libraries for Children and Young Adults. They stressed that children's libraries were a special building type with an exciting future. They are the places where children develop their first experiences with literature and other media.

Keynote speakers of the session were **Alistair Black**, Professor in Library and Information History, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and **Kirsten Drotner**, Professor, Danish Research Centre on Education and Advanced Media Materials, Odense, Denmark. They gave presentations which served as an introduction and provided the general background information. Altogether there were seven papers delivered, with a range of examples of children's libraries in the Netherlands, Denmark, Turkey, the USA, but also countries such as Chile and Oman. The case study from Indonesia "Design a space for children in a public library in developing country" by Anna Nove E. Variant, Airlangga University, Surabaya, Indonesia could not be presented.

The motto of the session "If I was the director" refers to a common children's saying and stresses the perspective that children adopt when they develop their ideas about libraries as places.

Alastair Black (Leeds Metropolitan University, now University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) and Carolynn Rankin (Leeds Metropolitan University): The History of Children's Library Design: Continuities and Discontinuities

The keynote speech by Alastair Black and Carolynn Rankin highlighted the development in architecture and design of children's libraries over the last century mostly in a British context. The Library Association Records from 1899-2002 provided source material for the analysis. Black and Rankin distinguished between four periods of the design history of children's libraries: before the First World War, the interwar-years 1920-1939, the period from 1945-1980 and the post 1980-period. Whereas at the beginning the library provided an atmosphere similar to schools with classrooms and a protective environment and thus played a distinctive educational role, the approach in the 1920s and 1930s became more liberal and resembled more a middle-class home atmosphere, where stories were told or constructive play offered. Children's libraries were regarded as rather high culture in society. In the years after 1945 until 1980 the approach to the building type appeared less elitist. Libraries were laid out in open plan and resembled offices, the interior design showing an increasingly Scandinavian influence. After 1980 libraries for children were equipped with domestic 'comfort zones' and developed as pop culture playgrounds. The

children's library Mowbra

Mowbray Gardens, Rotherham
Courtesy Opening the Book

original schoolroom image had diminished. Black and Rankin pointed to a current development: since building forms are shaped social forms they reflect at present the key policy in Britain on early childhood care and education. Public libraries in Britain encourage

language and literacy activities and want to involve the parents actively in this. Thus children's libraries provide fun areas and books for babies and toddlers in order to encourage families to come into the building and use the library. In such contexts special attention is paid to the design of ceilings, for that is the view that babies and toddlers are most familiar with. Also, there is a trend for 'theming', which Black and Rankin characterized as a concept of 'disneyisation'. Libraries are often designed as theme parks providing a connection to what is familiar for children: cartoons that represent adventure and discovery, treasure searching,

jungles etc. They stressed the important place of the children's library, and its design in Britain and elsewhere remained a constant issue.

Conference paper:
http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/papers/ifla75/103-black-en.pdf

Power Point Slides:
http://www.ifla.org/files/libraries-for-children-and-ya/publications/BLACK%20&%20RANKIN.pdf

Karen Betrams (Probiblio, Netherlands) and Monique Mosch (Heerhugowaard Library, Netherlands): Library of 100 Talents – Heerhugowaard, Netherlands

Karen Bertrams, who works as a Library Consultant and creates and improves programmes for children's libraries, gave a presentation that focused on a building project for a children's library in Heerhugowaard, a town situated 50 km north of Amsterdam. The library for children has been integrated into a building on the 3rd and 4th floor. The building also houses the Town Hall. The opening took place in 2006, since then the library has co-operated with all 25 primary schools in the town.

The library has been designed in close co-operation with architects, children and artists. They envisaged a library of the future, where information is organized and shared in a new way. The project was initiated and named "the library of one-hundred talents" by the Dutch Library Association in 2003, after a project in Reggio Emilia, Italy, where children – a think tank from a Montessori-School – successfully developed a library design. In Heerhugowaard the consultants and architects investigated the questions based on the Multiple Intelligence theory by *Howard Gardner*, of what the role of a child in the library is and how one gets children actively involved in a library. For that purpose they visited 10 schools and had brainstorming lessons with 250 children aged from 8 onwards. The children thus actively participated in the design and furnishing of the building. Karen Bertrams highlighted some of the predictable key ideas like cosy rooms, small reading rooms, theme corners, free internet as well as some unexpected findings

like: chill room (no access for parents), free chocolate bar, horror, music, living animals, soccer field with artificial grass, separate space

Library Design Montessorischool 2003

for boys and girls, the library changing every day, safe, clean and inspiring surroundings etc. The children also wanted a building where they could have a library summer camp with a disco, and sleep over in the library. It was found that the average visit until then in a children's library usually lasted 7 minutes and that children did not even bother to take their coats off. After the brainstorming sessions master classes were formed in which 12 children worked together with professionals, the architect *Hans van Heeswijk*, who has worked on a number of projects in the cultural sector among them the just finished Hermitage of Amsterdam, and the designer *Marieke van*

Diemen. Thus certain ideas were transformed into reality: the library was put at the top of the building, furniture was rounded in shape, and a secret space, places for studying or chilling out and an extensive media collection were incorporated into the building. Above all, it is possible for children to develop and organise activities.

Conference Paper:
http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/papers/ifla75/103-bertrams-en.pdf

Tone Lunden (Hjørring Library, Denmark): <u>The red thread –new central library in Hjørring, Denmark</u>

Tone Lunden, a library consultant from Denmark, described the new main library in Hjørring, which was opened in April 2008. The library had to be built in a very short time (1 year). It is placed on the first floor of a

Welcome...:)

shopping centre with 40 shops and underground parking facilities for 500 cars, designed by the architects *schmidt hammer lassen*. The main emphasis was on developing the interior design of the library. The interior designers were the visual artists *Rosan Bosch* and *Rune Fjord*, who developed the library as a multi-functional experience and knowledge centre within an impressive space of 5.090 sqm in close cooperation with the library staff and management. Their approach was based on the assumption that libraries change in line with the changes in society. Thus they now have a new social role as meeting place that encourages engagement, participation and development. Library materials should be

presented in a more exciting way and in surroundings and contexts that tempt the users to stay and concentrate. There were several approaches taken to achieve this: first the library was seen as a "third place"; second, it was conceived as a theatre that always has to stage new plays and can be divided into three areas: stage, store of set pieces and backstage; finally, the Danish architect *Jan Gehl* provided inspiration, as he is concerned about multiplicity and diversity in the construction of cities and believes that people want nooks, angles, hideouts and edges as they move around a space. Thus, for example, the children's department should also provide opportunities for physical exercise. However, the heart of the new library is a physical structure – the red thread – that twists and winds its way through the library, working both as a decoration and active communication tool and mediatory element for users and library staff. It mediates between three zones within the library: the meeting place, the quiet work place and the place for inspiration. The library in Hjorring does not have a division between areas for children or adults, they move around in each other's zones. It was essential to create a sliding and balanced transition of offers for children, teens and adults. Thus the library has places for every taste and all generations, shared as well as separate. It contains many

different kinds of furniture, rooms and colours, has toys as a means of dialogue, and contains a V.I.P.-Lounge for "Very Important Parents", a poet's staircase, Pipi's hideout surrounded by a large green field and a bubble wall with reading tubes. – altogether a wonderful variety of spaces for its users.

Conference paper:
http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/papers/ifla75/103-lunden-en.pdf

Power Point Slides:
http://www.ifla.org/files/libraries-for-children-and-a/publications/The%20Read%20Thread_IFLA.pdf

Rosann Bosch & Rune Fjord information:
http://www.bosch-fjord.com/#/222600_221842

H. Inci Önal (Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey): Designing tomorrow's libraries with children's views

Dr. H. Inci Önal gave a paper on children's library services in Turkey relating to modern demands of library architecture and library services design. The main characteristics stressed by her were interactivity, scalability, media-richness and granularity. She referred to the current situation in Turkey, where every school has a library (57.837) and every public library (1.096) also has a children's collection.

However, many children's and school libraries are old, out-of-date, poorly maintained, unsafe, uncomfortable and lack specific design elements that are likely to support teaching, learning and behaviour. She expressed the need to shift from collection-focused to user-focused facilities and underlined the role of children's participation in library design. For that purpose she carried out a project in 10 Turkish cities, where 350 children aged from 7-11, painted pictures depicting libraries and library services as though they were the director and could thus determine the design and the work of the library. Önal showed a substantial sample of the children's drawings and discussed the empirical findings: many children in Turkey consider libraries should be welcoming institutions with an intimate and welcoming atmosphere both inside and outside. The library should have comfortable, quiet, easily supervisable, adequately heated/ cooled and well-lit single and group study areas for long-term use. Computers and books should be distributed throughout the whole space and computer access should be available in a variety of layouts. The children also wanted an informal area with drinks facilities for casual meetings and book discussions available during library opening hours and a central reference desk. They did not think there should be open spaces since children are not encouraged to run, jump or climb n a library but it should have study space where noise is tolerated and welcome, as well as quiet areas. The design of the libraries of the 21st century should include comfortable places, meeting and study rooms, teen friendly areas, IT equipment and a sustainable environment. In her conclusion Dr Onal recommended that children should be included in a committee that supervises a design and construction project for a school or children's library.

Conference paper:
http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/papers/ifla75/103-onal-en.pdf

Power Point Slides:
http://www.ifla.org/files/libraries-for-children-and-ya/publications/INCI%20ONAL.pdf

Kirsten Drotner (DREAM - Danish Research Center on Education and Advanced Media Materials, Odense, Denmark):
Children's media culture: a key to libraries of the future?

Kirsten Drotner as the second keynote speaker took a theoretical approach with her paper on children's media culture in a changing socio-cultural context. She acknowledged that adult authority and power often determine the vision and decisions of children's media culture, yet a shift of perspective that is directed towards the rights of children as stated in the UN Convention, article 13 from 1989 is necessary. There the right to freedom of expression of children is defined. This right includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice. Traditionally the public library has been an important catalyst for safeguarding the children's freedom of expression, but it was mainly perceived as a repository of print. Drotner argued that along with media moves that are characterized by convergence, commoditisation and globalisation current decisions to realize visions are made under very different conditions concerning technology, economy, policies and contexts of use. Thus, for example, hybrid libraries show declining attendance rates due to increasing competition from commercial providers. From a child's perspective libraries are just one of many leisure options. Public libraries have therefore to develop as part of a mediated leisure culture that offers, apart from books, a wide range of new, multimodal forms of expression. They need to define themselves in their relation to particular functions for users. These functions aim at facilitating the quality of knowledge in relation to information, entertainment and communication. Children's leisure culture has become a 'participatory culture' of digital media that enables globalisation of interaction and collaboration with others at a distance, but is also dependent on purchasing power and results in a digital and increasingly social divide. Key competencies for children become semiotic competencies that are the ability to give shape to and handle multimodal expressions as part of everyday collaboration, communication and participation. This shift from information literacy to digital literacy necessitates a quality assessment of other material than the book and a social obligation to help and guide the children in the process of shaping, sharing, receiving and valuing information. Appropriateness and discernment of information rather than access as such take on an increased importance. Further, librarians have to develop different strategies of communication with users; Drotner advises here a dialogic approach.

Conference paper:
English version:
http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/papers/ifla75/103-drotner-en.pdf

German version
http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/papers/ifla75/103-drotner-de.pdf

Barbara Gubbin (Jacksonville Public Library, USA) and
Alex Lamis (A. M. Stern Architects, New York, USA)
Jacksonville Public Library Children's and Teens Libraries

Barbara Gubbin, director of Jacksonville Public Library, Florida and the architect Alex Lamis from A.M. Stern Architects, New York, presented an interesting and impressive case study of the public library in Jacksonville, which was opened in 2001, covering a space of 30.000 sqm. Whereas Gubbin gave a general introduction to the background of the building process and the experiences and "lessons learned" after 5 years of use, Lamis, who is an acknowledged expert in the field of library design, having worked on a number of projects such as the Nashville public library, Baker Library and Bloomberg Center at Harvard Business School, William Gates Computer Science Building in Stanford and currently the George W. Bush Library and Presidential Museum in Dallas, explained the design process for the library space devoted to children and teens within the building.The Public Library of Jacksonville was built as part of the public works program "The Better Jacksonville Plan" replacing a building from the

as "places" with special themes for the single target groups. The children's library covers 1.800 sqm for children up to 12 years, including toddlers. It reflects the geography of Florida – thus the entrance has been modelled on the swamplands of North-East Florida, the interior design reflects natural elements from the region moving from the inland to the ocean. The Teen library has been designed in a different way: adjacent to the popular material section, it has large furniture and wave-like ceiling elements. It aims to convey a clubhouse-cool atmosphere with various opportunities to display videos as well as informal seating groups with café-style seats etc.

Barbara Gubbin reported that the library was an instant success with over 13.000 people attending the official opening in 2005. Since then circulation numbers as well as attendance and number of programmes have substantially increased. Although located downtown with limited housing and few schools, the library is frequented for various reasons. She had only a few items which she would ideally have wanted: an aquarium, a dance floor, a videogame console, a recording studio in the teen's section and a globe in the Children's Room.

1960s. In addition to the new central library, which cost $ 100 million (US), there were 7 other new branch libraries built. Altogether the public library system of Jacksonville consists of a Main Library and 20 branch libraries. The design was chosen as a result of an international design competition. During and after the competition phase the ideas of library staff and other stake holders were taken into consideration in a collaborative process. As a result there were separate areas for children and teens created, which are best described

Conference paper:
http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/papers/ifla75/103-gubbin-en.pdf

Power Point Slides:
http://www.ifla.org/files/libraries-for-children-and-ya/publications/ALEX%20LAMIS.pdf

Robert A.M. Stern architects information:
http://www.ramsa.com/project.aspx?id=83

**Gonzalo Oyarzun (Santiago Public Library, Chile),
James R. Keller (Vitetta Library design Studio, Philadelphia, USA) and
Katheleen R.T. Imhoff (Lexington Public Library, Lexington, USA):
Environments in public libraries for young children around the world**

The last presentation of the session was in three parts: first Gonzalo Oyarzun spoke about the first major public library in Chile, the *Biblioteca de Santiago* as a challenge for children and youth; second, James R. Keller from VITETTA Library Design Studio,

Philadelphia, USA described the planning and design of the first public library for children in Oman; finally, Katheleen R.T. Imhoff provided a series of special solutions for children's space in libraries in Europe and the US.

Santiago Public Library in Chile

The library which was opened in 2005 covers a space of 22.000 sqm. It services a region with more than 6 million inhabitants. Most of the users are children and youngsters (appr. 65%), with most of them belonging to the poorest areas of the city. Santiago Public Library is for them an expansion of home, a place to study and spend their leisure time. In the library talking and speaking aloud is permitted, as well as eating and drinking. Information is arranged thematically instead of using numeric or alphabetical codes as provided by the Dewey system for example, the most commonly used classification system in Chile. The library staff includes not only librarians,

Biblioteca di Santiago, Chile   Consultants: VITETTA Architects: Cox y Ugarte

but also teachers, entertainers, performers, story-tellers and sketch artists. Public libraries are on the political agenda in Chile. Santiago Public Library is home to meetings related to childhood and youth. The Chilean President, Michelle Bachelet, has passed a law that all districts lacking a library should have one by the year 2010. The Directorate of Libraries and Museums (DIBAM), of Chile, selected James R. Keller, AIA, of VITETTA, as design consultant for development of this library. The library is a conversion of an early 20th century government warehouse building into a state of the art public community centre. Mr. Keller worked directly with DIBAM and the local team of Cox and Ugarte Architects, Santiago, and NAVE Industrial Designers, Santiago to create a progressive Library and Cultural Center with a merchandising/retail concept, dynamic children's centre, and performing arts and gallery space to accommodate over 3,000 persons.

http://vitetta.hotknifedeveloper.com/index.php?/design_programs/libraries/architecture_engineering_chile_biblioteca_santiago_santiago_public_library/

Children's public library in Muscat, Oman

The sultanate of Oman will soon have its first Public Library for Children and Families. The idea dates back to the year 2007, when forty interested citizen formed a Board of Directors together with Her Highness Seyyida, Dr. Mona Al Said as Honorary Chair and Dr. Samira Moosa as Board Chair. The Board developed a vision for the library and selected the firm VITETTA from Philadelphia to design it. It received the building site as a gift from His Highness Seyyid Haitham, Minister of Heritage and Culture, as well as financial support from the private sector, mainly from the Oman Oil Company.. The future Children's Public Library will be situated in the capital of Oman. For the planning process a focus group study was formed consisting of 22 boys and girls from Muscat with different socio-economic backgrounds as well as children from the local orphanage. The future library will provide access to all the children of Muscat (ca. 190.000) from birth to 18 years of age. The library will express its mission of literacy, learning and community through a careful choice of materials, scale and the use of colour. It will serve as a complement to the Children's Museum, the Children's Theatre and the Museum of Natural History, which are all situated in the neighbourhood. It will be 5.000 sqm in size with four distinct levels, which are devoted to the learning stages of a child.

http://vitetta.hotknifedeveloper.com/index.php?/design_programs/libraries/architecture_engineering_oman_childrens_public_library/

Children's Public Library in Muscat, Oman   Architects: VITETTA/ COWI

Children's spaces from around the world
Katheleen R. T. Imhoff, a library consultant
specializing in library buildings and interior
space planning, demonstrated in her paper the
three A's which are important in a library
design process: adaptability, accessibility and
aesthetics. She took several public libraries as
examples: Amsterdam Public Library, the
Netherlands, Lexington Public Library,
Kentucky, USA, Asker Public Library in Oslo,
Norway and Indianapolis Public Library in
Indiana, USA. She stressed that adaptability of
children's space is an important planning
issue. Ways to achieve this are, for example,
shelves on wheels, which can easily be moved
between rooms and spaces as well as being
adapted for different children's programs.
Other examples are sliding glass doors that
allow the same space to be used for two

functions or multi-functional meeting spaces.
Shelving and furniture should also be height
appropriate. Aesthetics should particularly be
considered when designing an entrance to a
library, as well as for signage within a building.
She advised the use of strong colours as a
way to define space and themed graphics.

Conference Paper:
http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/papers/ifla75/103-oyarzun-en.pdf

Power Point slides:
http://www.ifla.org/files/libraries-for-children-and-ya/publications/Final%20PDF%20Doc%2008_11_09.pdf

(All the pictures are from the powerpoint presentations on IFLA website:
http://www.ifla.org/annual-conference/ifla75/programme2009-en.php)