

# Challenges in transforming libraries from collection- to user-centered organisations



# The basic challenge - society

- The digital knowledge society is spreading worldwide
- Changing the media landscape and user patterns
- And changing work, relations, culture



# Challenge for the public library



- The library has lost its unique position as an information provider and is now in deep competition with other platforms
- Classic library products like reference work is no more requested
- ‘The world’s knowledge no longer fits neatly on library shelves’\*
- \* Fr. Stielow

# Three strategies to meet the challenge

1. to keep the traditional library running
2. find ways to become a digital library
3. design new library services that match the needs of people living in a digital world



# 1. ...to keep the traditional library running

The traditional library has still a lot of customers, there is still a need for books. Users may be happy with the service.

*But* the number of users will gradually diminish and very few new and younger users turn up. In a number of countries this strategy has led to reductions in budgets and many libraries have been closed or run by volunteers.



## 2. find ways to become a digital library



- Extend traditional services with digital services but keep the library as the institution we know today.
- This strategy may work if a functional and reasonable model for use of copyrighted material can be agreed on – which is not yet the case. It is hard to compete with commercial digital services because of copyright restrictions.

# 3. Design new library services

The third type of strategy is to try to design new library services that match the needs of people living in the globalized digital world. Leave the main focus on the collection and try to meet new needs in the lifelong learning field.



The challenge is to create a new kind of institution with new kind of competencies and services. This is difficult, but probably sustainable.



# Which strategy should be followed?

- The first two strategies suffer from not recognizing that the challenge is more than digital –it is a fundamental change in culture.
- The third strategy is aiming at leaving the twentieth century concept for public libraries and building new relations. Pioneer work.





# The international library literature

Discussions about

- to which degree should the library be digital,
- should it present media or rather be a gateway,
- should it become a cultural arena or rather the public living room in the local community?
- should it become a learning center or focus more on creative activities and workshops?
- to which extent should it be an 'institution' and to which a more 'civic-society –like-space' where citizens are deeply involved in running and creating activities?

# The organisational challenge

Following strategy 3, each and every library must define its own profile, frames and offers based on local resources and needs. This is the core in the process of changing from collection oriented library to a focus on user needs in a fluid society where more or less everybody is online 24/7.



# New needs may for instance be

- digital and other learning activities,
- helping people to become digital citizens,
- reading activities for children and adult,
- creating frames for meeting places
- supporting social relations and creative activities
- cultural inspiration
- community building activities



# If you decide to go for strategy 3

- Designing new library services matching the digital globalised world and helping citizens to transform ...
- You must start by analyzing local needs and conditions and find out where your library may create value in new ways for and with the citizens.
- **'Model program for public libraries'** may be of help.  
<http://modelprogrammer.kulturstyrelsen.dk/en/>

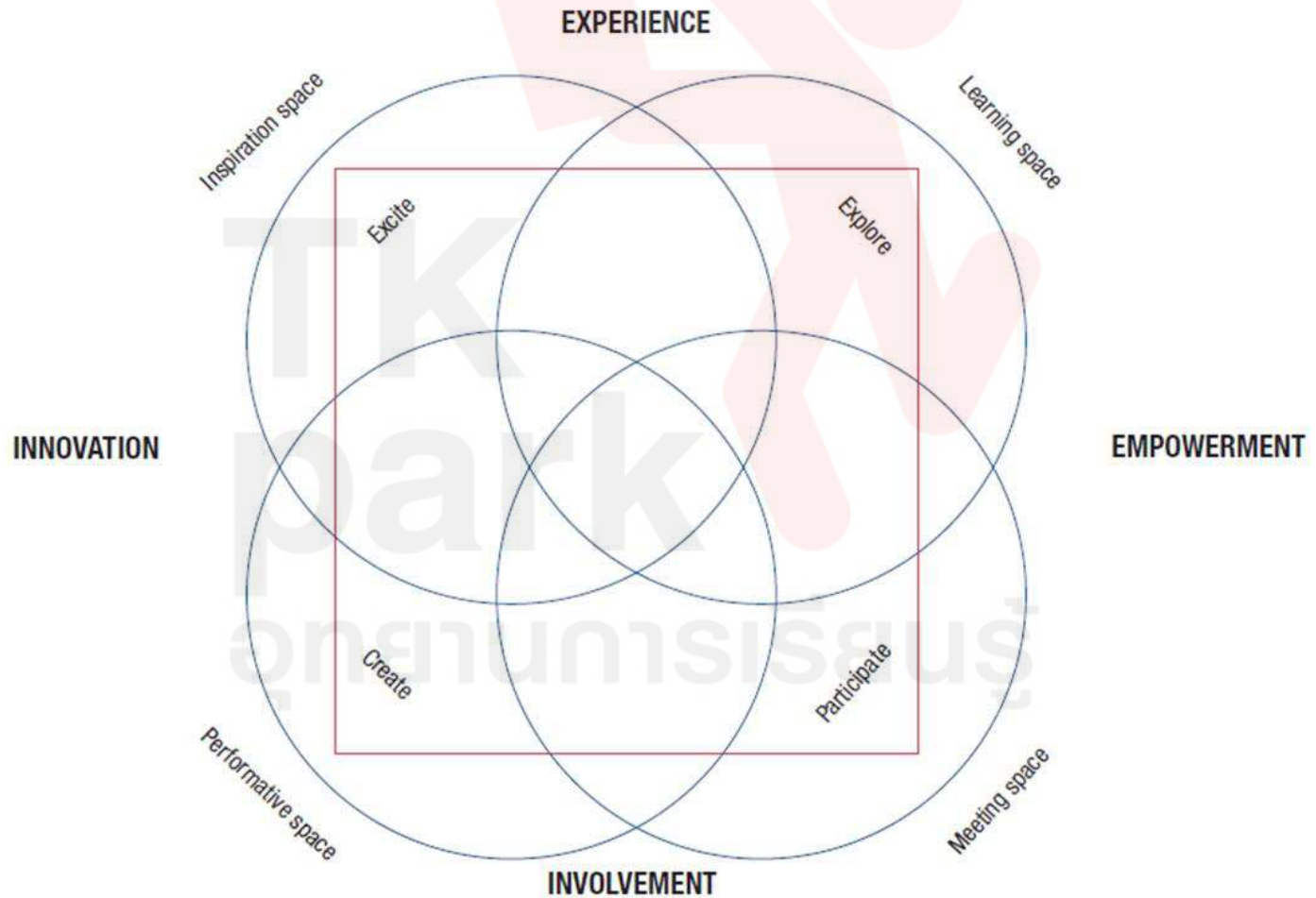
# A model for a new library concept

Overall objective:

Experience,  
Involvement,  
Empowerment  
Innovation.

- the first two goals concern individual's perception, experience and involvement in her or his quest for meaning and identity,
- the other two objectives underpin societal goals. Empowerment concerns the development of strong and independent citizens who are able to solve everyday problems. Innovation has to do with finding new answers to practical problems or developing completely new concepts, methods or artistic expressions.

# 4 space model



# New tasks for the library worker

The librarian becomes a facilitator and inspirator for using media, organising makerspaces, clubs, workshops, creates exhibitions and recommendations, gives booktalks and displays the daily collection offer and space in the library

# The Learning Space

- Programmes for learning activities
- E-learning offers
- Informal learning, help to self-help
- Workshops, instruction and consultations run by volunteers
- Media-literacy





# Design for different library learning spaces



# Inspiration space

- Design of inviting and inspiring spaces
- Stages and spots for events and various activities
- Inspiring display of media



# Simple daily performances in the library space



# The Meeting space

- The informal, un-planned meetings
- Organised debates, events, cultural activities
- Space for playing, workshops, citizen-organised meetings
- A good café is a must



# Design for various kind of meetings



# The Performative Space

- Creative and practical activities – organised or individual
- Workshops, gear, facilities,
- Programmes, masterclasses
- Exhibition and display of results and products



# Performance and creativity: offer space, equipment, assistance



# The fifth space: the library in the city: 3 Danish examples. Helsingore: a new city profile

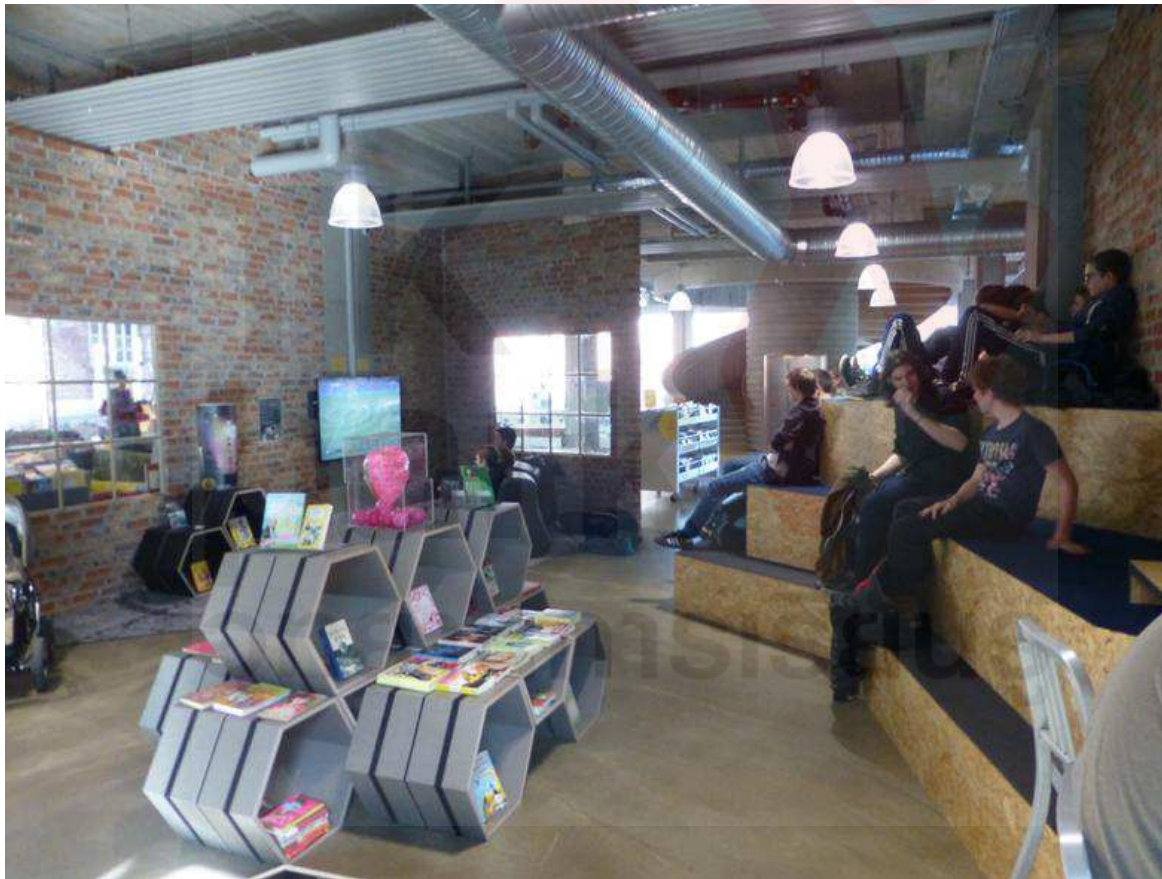




# The Library NorthWest, Cph: A revitalized neighbourhood



# Herning: The library creates life in city



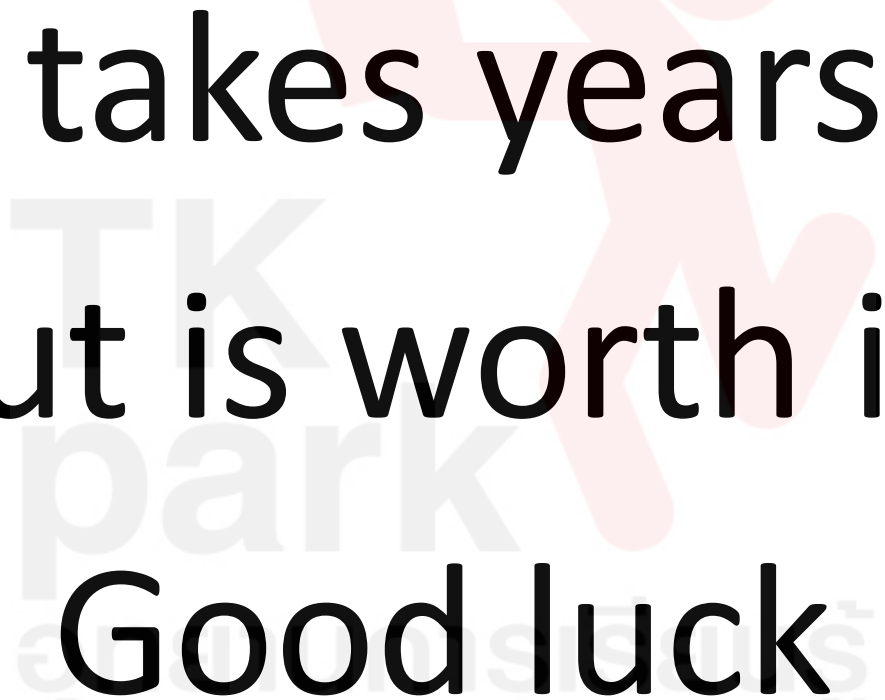
# The Four-space model is a new concept

- Not just a design manual!
- It involves new services that requires new competencies – action learning, new staff?
- Partnerships and active involvement of volunteers and citizens
- To implement the model you need to organize with teams and projects, and ‘unboss’ the traditional organisation and rely on the creativity of the staff and....

# Do you want to try?

You must be prepared for problems related to

- actually developing a new vision for the library,
- for sharing it with the full staff, as a common vision
- for building a strategy for implementing the vision and along with that to
- enable new competencies needed for creating new services, and for
- communicating and testing it.



It takes years...  
but is worth it!  
Good luck