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Best practices of children's library services around the world

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Abstract

Two years ago, during the WLIC in Berlin, Marian Koren held a speech about Children's Rights and how libraries can help children in ensuring and practicing their rights.
One year ago, during the WLIC in Buenos Aires, the Standing Committee of Section Libraries for Children and Young Adults was very pleased to present the Guidelines for Children's Libraries Services.
Today we are facing the challenge to combine those two with the Guidelines for Library Service for Young Adults (published 1996 and revised 2001) and especially how we can put into practice, everything we learn and know in theory.
IFLANET is a very good tool for exchange of information. Therefore we would like to present several best practices from all over the world. Pictures sometimes say more then words so the photos almost can tell their own story. In due time we will publish the best practices on IFLANET.
Following the chapters of the Guidelines for Children's libraries services all aspects will pass.

Guidelines for Children's Libraries Services
- more important than ever to children and their families all over the world -

The Guidelines for Children's Libraries Services contains many words but since we live in an image society now a days we would like the pictures to tell their own story. Only small comments will be given. I use the text of the Guidelines as a guide!

Library services for children have never been as important for children and their families all over the world as they are today. Access to the knowledge and the multicultural riches of the world, as well as lifelong learning and literacy skills have become the priority of our society. A quality children's library equips children with lifelong learning and literacy skills enabling them to participate and contribute to the community. It should constantly respond to the increasing changes in the society and meet the information, cultural and entertainment needs of all children. Every child should be familiar and comfortable with the local library and possess the skills to find their way around libraries in general.

Pictures 1,2,3,

"By providing a wide range of materials and activities, public libraries provide an opportunity for children to experience the enjoyment of reading and the excitement of discovering knowledge and works of the imagination. Children and their parents should be taught how to make the best use of a library and how to develop skills in the use of printed and electronic media. Public libraries have a special responsibility to support the process of learning to read, and to promote books and other media for children. The library must provide special events for children, such as storytelling and activities related to the library's services and resources. Children should be encouraged to use the library from an early age, as this will make them more likely to remain users in future years. In multilingual countries, books and audio-visual materials for children should be available in their mother tongue." (*The Public Library Service -- IFLA / UNESCO Guidelines for development, 2001*)

Pictures 4,5,6,

Meeting children's needs

The United Nation's Convention on ***The Rights of the Child*** stresses the right of every child to the development of his or her full potential, the right to free and open access to information, materials and programs, under equal conditions for all, irrespective of:
- age
- race
- sex
- religious, national and cultural background
- language
- social status or
- personal skills and abilities.

Growing up is a local community activity, not a global activity for children, but one affected by global issues.

Target groups

Target groups welcomed by the children's library, either individually or in groups, include:

- babies and toddlers
- pre-school children   picture 7
- school children up to 13 pictures 8,9
- special needs groups
- parents and other family members picture 10
- caregivers   picture 11
- other adults working with children, books and media. Picture 12

Goals of children's services

- To facilitate the right of every child to
  - information
  - functional, visual, digital and media literacy
  - cultural development
  - lifelong learning
  - creative programs in leisure time picture 13
- To provide children with open access to all resources and media picture 14
- To provide various activities for children, parents and caregivers pictures 15,16,17
- To facilitate families' entry into the community
- To empower children and to advocate for their freedom and safety picture 18
- To encourage children to become confident and competent people pictures 19,20
- To strive for a peaceful world.

Funding

Children are a worthwhile "investment".

Children's libraries need a budget to maintain and improve the quality of materials and services offered to the public.

Standard budgets can be supplemented with outside sources of funding, such as:

- government grants (for special programs and new initiatives)
- cultural organisations (for music, dance, drama, arts, historical and ethnic presentations) pictures 21,22
- publishers (for visits by authors or illustrators and for other give-aways)
- sponsorship (local businesses and volunteer organisations to support specific events) picture 23
- non-governmental agencies
- matching funds.

Materials

Children's libraries should include a variety of developmentally appropriate materials in all formats, including printed materials (books, periodicals, comics, brochures), media (CDs, DVDs, cassettes), toys, learning games, computers, software and connectivity.

Space

Children of all ages should find the library an open, inviting, attractive, challenging and non-threatening place to visit.

Ideally, children's service needs its own library area which must be easily recognisable (e.g. special furnishings, decorations and colours) and distinct from other parts of the library. Libraries offer a public space where children can meet each other -- or can meet others in cyber-space.
<u>Pictures 24-31</u>

Services
Children's services should be taken as important and treated equally with those for adults.
Children's libraries should meet the information, cultural and entertainment needs of the community's children by:
- lending a variety of materials <u>picture 32</u>
- offering information and reference services
- helping children select materials
- offering training in library skills and information literacy
- doing motivating activities (reading promotion) <u>picture 33,34</u>
- offering creative programming and storytelling <u>picture 35</u>
- educating parents and caregivers
- providing reference and training for caregivers, pre-school teachers, school teachers and librarians
- co-operating with and supporting community organisations and institutions

Networking
A network with other organisations and institutions in the local community is wise.
- Investigating the information and cultural needs of the community and trying to match those needs with library resources insures that local institutions do not compete but co-operate to the benefit of children.
- Schools are important partners. The school library provides support for the educational process and the children's library deals with self-education and leisure reading.
- Healthcare centres, day-care centres, kindergartens and other caregiving places are institutions which are necessary and welcome partners, especially in reading promotion activities for children, parents and professionals.

<u>Picture 36, outdoor libraries Paris</u>

Publicity
A positive, public profile for children's libraries is most important as competition for a child's time and attention grows. Reading and literacy are necessary skills in order to communicate and their value must be constantly reinforced.

Human resources
Effective and professionally run children's libraries require trained and committed children's librarians. Desired skills include:
- enthusiasm
- strong communication, interpersonal, team working and problem-solving skills
- the ability to network and co-operate
- the ability to initiate, be flexible and be open to change
- the ability to analyse user needs, plan, manage and evaluate services and programs
- an eagerness to learn new skills and develop professionally.

Also needed list to read:

- child psychology and development
- the theories of reading development and the promotion
- artistic and cultural opportunities
- literature for children in books and related media.

Pictures 37,38,39,40,41,42

Management and evaluation

It is important that those who manage children's services participate in the planning process for the library as a whole, to insure an awareness and support for children's services in the overall goals and long term plans of the library.

Reliable performance information is a necessary tool for evaluation and improvement

- collect statistics related to resources, staff, services, circulation, activities, etc., to provide data for planning, showing accountability and making informed management decisions
- measure staff performance based on standardised competencies.

Conclusion

By putting on IFLANET the best practices from all over the world we work together on improving our library services by using the expertise of colleagues from all over the world. A book cabinet invented for a rural library in Africa can be a very good example for preschool and school libraries somewhere else. It broadens our views and opens our minds for possibilities we couldn't have guessed before.