



**Pestalozzi-Bibliothek Zürich (PBZ) – Zürich City
Library www.pbz.ch**

By Christian Relly, Pestalozzi-Bibliothek Zürich

Dear colleagues and friends!

Some of you might remember the 1999 conference in *Zürich*. And I am almost sure, that one of your principal impressions was the rather poor situation of public libraries in Switzerland and more specifically in *Zürich*. You have visited the central library in an old building dating from the thirties, where the ground floor was occupied by a different institution and where the entrance to the library was on the first floor. This is the reason why you were not able to see from the outside that there was a library inside of the building. This situation was – not at all surprising – connected with insufficient support for and a lack of interest in the library work from politicians and the City administration.

Here and now, unfortunately, I cannot report about a total change and, seen from the outside, the actual situation has more or less remained the same. But the prospects are much better today:

1. Strategic planning

Today the PBZ is dealing with several projects which are all running at the same time. Therefore and especially with reference to the considerable cost of the investment caused by that, the City Council required us to draw up a strategic plan of the future library network within the city of *Zürich*. (We call such paper a "Masterplan".)

Today's branch network of the PBZ came into being in the period between the fifties and the seventies of the 20th century. An essential part in this process was the planning of the cities' community centres. According to the plans in those days these centres incorporated a library. As a result, new libraries arose. But from today's point of view they are neither at the right location nor do they fit into the network planning.

In the course of economy measures a few years ago, two small branch libraries were shut down. The network has beyond that remained unchanged since the early seventies. The search for better premises at more suitable locations has only been successful in a few cases.

From today's perspective the number of branch locations is too high and most of them are too small in size. The tasks of public libraries have become considerably manifold in recent years. The clientele has become more demanding. They expect an extensive media selection at convenient locations with extended opening hours which in principle should at least be the same as the shop opening hours. The best possible use of the available resources can therefore only be granted with a smaller number of library branches but more developed ones instead. It is no longer necessary that every traditional part of the city, every single quarter, has its own library, but, depending on location and size, it is very likely possible that one branch is able to supply several quarters.

This plan is most likely to make it possible to cope with the enormous number of loans. These have been increasing continuously for years (the same as in many other cities) with a particularly strong rise in recent years. And the rise is bigger in large libraries with a more comprehensive collection and longer opening hours. That means that most of the customers prefer bigger units. This outcome asks for larger branch units as well. Branches, where the operational procedure can be carried out more efficiently, where self-service terminals can be used and where

staff in sufficient number always is at disposal for information and advice.

The trend towards larger and well equipped libraries instead of numerous small ones can be noticed world-wide in public librarianship. Besides, it is in accordance with the development in many other fields (such as the postal services, small shops in the living area, banks and their branch network, just to name a few). The public is prepared and capable of accepting longer distances.

According to our "Masterplan" the number of libraries will within the next four or five years be reduced from today 17 to 13. Some of the remaining libraries will be enlarged and for others we have to find new buildings.

I have to emphasize that we decided for the reduction of the number of branches not due to economical pressure but to improve our service to the public.

The future branch network of the PBZ will comprise the following library types:

Type	surface	specification
Central library	2500 m ²	located in City centre
District library	700 – 1000 m ²	covering several quarters
Branch library	300 – 400 m ²	covering one quarter (can be a school library at the same time)

It is a binding rule for all types that they have to be centrally located, are easily accessible for pedestrians and cyclists, are connected to public transport and with entry at street level. The premises should be visible from outside and inside one should easily find its way around. Locations in shopping centres, where libraries attract additional visitors, are also possible. All these aspects meet international standards.

Concerning the premises, stock, services, layout etc. the PBZ sticks to the guidelines of the Association of Public Libraries and Librarians (SAB). The “guidelines for community libraries (Solothurn, 1995) represent a “Swiss compromise between the more developed urban and the more rural or mountainous areas and they are comparably modest. (For instance, the SAB recommends 1.2 media per inhabitant within the catchment area, compared with 2 to 3 media recommended by the UNESCO.)

I am not sure when that plan will be realized, it certainly will not be during my time as director of the PBZ. The economic situation in Zürich is not better than elsewhere. The total amount of taxes will most probably decline within the next years (but after that it will hopefully go up again!) We are waiting for the City Council to accept our strategic planning. And I am almost sure, that it will be accepted. Because of that I dare to say that the prospects for our library network are much better now than they used to be four years ago when INTAMEL was in Zürich.

2. Subsidies

In 1999 I also presented the (at that time) new system for the calculation of subsidies, which, I think, was almost unique. We can now look back to a four year experience. Last year, we renegotiated the contract with the city government. It came into force at the beginning of this year. We have slightly modified the system, but basically it is still the same. The financial contribution depends for the most part on our output, on our performance. I will show you the list and you can see how it works:

	Unit (sFr.)	Figures	Total amount
inhabitants	6.50	363'886	2'365'259
pupils	16.70	30'844	515'095
member cards	75.00	13'900	1'042'500
student cards	90.00	4'400	396'000
adults lendings	-.80	1'210'000	968'000
pupils lendings	1.60	700'000	1'120'000
visitors (entries)	-.60	700'000	420'000
per 1 sFr. takings	-.75	800'000	600'000
child's events	600.00	60	36'000

I have to add that this model is not at all typical for Swiss public libraries. I believe we are the first library with such a financing scheme. It is also a pilot project within the City Council. I like it and it makes our work, our strategy and our management more effective. It also allows us to see a financial result for the quantity and even for the quality of our work. The better we do our work the more money we get.

But there is one problem: There is an upper limit. The City parliament did not dare to leave the sum unlimited. They were afraid of our doing better and better. Therefore they decided for a maximum of 6.5 Mio SFr. We reached this level last year. The figures of our performance are still rising. Therefore we want the parliament to decide for a limit of 7.5 Mio. or, even better, to omit that limit at all.

3. Survey

With regard to the forthcoming projects we wanted to know more about those people who do not make use of our libraries. Because, we intend of course, to attract a larger part of the population in the future.

Therefore we engaged an opinion research institute to carry out a representative survey, focusing on the adult population living in the city of Zürich to find out more about

- the percentage of library users
- the profile of non-users - and what kind of people they are
- what their reasons are, what motives they have not to use the library
- what they know about the library
- what they expect from the library (and)
- what we should change to attract them

The survey consisted of telephone interviews of approximately 20 minutes with 400 adults living in the city of Zürich followed by a face to face interview with forty of those who explained not to be using libraries.

We got the report of that survey two weeks ago. It is a volume of more than 300 pages containing a host of information. I will mention just a few of it and I do it in a simplified form:

- We have only 10% of the adult population as regular users (there are other libraries in Zürich, but PBZ is the only "official" public library, so to speak). "Regular" meaning: at least one visit every six months.
- None of the non-users is against libraries. They all think that libraries are o.k. – not for them but for others: for students, for children, for teachers, for retired persons
- It comes as no surprise, that non-users know only very little about libraries, and what they know is often wrong. They have some kind of an old- fashioned image going back to their childhood when they first went to a public (or school) library,

e.g. they think we have no modern books and they would not expect that we have the latest videos and DVDs on offer.

Of course that is to a certain extent due to our old buildings and partly outdated furniture and it also means that you can do your job as a librarian in the best way, that you can have the most accurate and up to date collection, but if the "outfit" is not top, people will not realize the quality of its content.

- And there is another problem: Their image of the library is to a high extent influenced by
 - a) University libraries with special collections, with enormous stocks and - sorry to say so – often not very customer friendly staff
 - b) films, novels, where libraries and librarians – as you all know - often appear as caricatures with a somewhat negative cliché .

As I have mentioned earlier, this survey is new and I have the report on my desk since a couple of days. Therefore we did not yet decide on its consequences and the measures we will take. And I hope that I get some additional input here on our visits and in discussions. If you have made your own experience in similar situations, so please let me know.

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