

Metlib Conference, Zagreb Croatia 16 – 21 May 2010

Enduring values and excellence

Croatia and Zagreb

“Croatia is a country in southeastern Europe, at the crossroads of the Pannonian Plain, the Balkans, and the Adriatic Sea. Its capital (and largest city) is Zagreb. Croatia borders Slovenia to the north, Hungary to the northeast, Bosnia and Herzegovina to the southeast, Serbia to east and Montenegro to the southeast.

The Croats arrived in the early seventh century in what is Croatia today. They organized the state into two dukedoms. The first king, King Tomislav was crowned in AD 925 and Croatia was elevated into the status of a kingdom. The Kingdom of Croatia retained its sovereignty for almost two centuries, reaching its peak during the rule of Kings Peter Krešimir IV and Demetrius Zvonimir. Croatia entered a union with Hungary in 1102. In 1526, the Croatian Parliament elected Ferdinand from the House of Habsburg to the Croatian throne. In 1918, Croatia declared independence from Austria–Hungary and co-founded the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. An independent Croatian state briefly existed during World War II. After World War II, Croatia became a founding member of the Second Yugoslavia. On 25 June 1991, Croatia declared independence and became a sovereign state.” (Wikipedia)

The population of Zagreb is 800,000. Zagreb City Libraries has a modern and well-organized network of public libraries. Beside the main library there are 12 branch libraries. The City Library of Zagreb was founded in 1907 and is the oldest public library in Zagreb.

Themes of the conference

The theme of the International Federation of Library Association’s Metropolitan Libraries Section’s 44th annual conference was **Enduring Values and Excellence**. Forty five delegates from 30 cities and 25 countries joined the conference which focused on the interests and challenges of large urban library systems. The venues were the Central City Library in Zagreb and the August Cesarec Library, Subiceva, which is a new branch library that was to open in 2 weeks time. The official opening was held at the Mayor’s Office in the Presidential Palace and was hosted by the Croatian Minister of Culture.

The program covered four sub themes:

- Communication
- Meeting places
- Integration and inclusion
- Business excellence

The main issues facing public libraries were covered in this conference:

1. Libraries as physical spaces and meeting places, with presentations from Oslo, Zurich, Singapore and Stockholm where beautiful architecturally and culturally significant buildings have or are being built and are urban meeting places.

2. Libraries in the online space, covering content creation and digitisation, including a presentation by the State Library of Queensland on The Edge at, an innovative and creative space and from Zagreb City Libraries and Albanian National library on their digitisation programs.
3. Creating connected inclusive communities, with presentations on a new library in Zurich that is designed to encourage its multicultural community to use the library; a social inclusion toolkit developed by the Canadian Urban Libraries Council; and a wide ranging literacy program in Rotterdam.
4. Libraries using business tools including presentations on a Victorian statewide business excellence project, *Being the Best We Can*; Ottawa's strategic reorganisation; and the implementation of Lean principles at Copenhagen Public Library.

Running through these themes were stories and successes of libraries in Croatia and neighbouring countries and the conference offered a very special opportunity to learn about the City's libraries in context.

Program

The opening sessions were centred on library services in Zagreb and Croatia. Professor Aleksandra Horvat from the University of Zagreb described libraries as mirrors of their communities and that people use and need libraries in different ways in different times. Two hundred years ago in Croatia the original Casinos were popular, they were pleasant places where people could go and read and sound similar to our Mechanics Institutes of the 19th and 20th centuries. One of the major new roles that is emerging for public libraries is digitising local history which appeals to people's nostalgia and curiosity. By providing the opportunity for people to annotate old photographs, imagination is raised and people are offered the chance to tell their stories. Prof Horvat said that libraries in Europe are looking for common infrastructures and are particularly co operating with digitisation projects. One of the main roles she sees public libraries having is to promote information literacy.

Professor Andrea Violic also from the University of Zagreb spoke about participative cultural policy in Zagreb. She covered themes of public space, social inclusion, culture as an integration mechanism and participatory cultural policies. She described Zagreb's Cultural Map which includes the National Theatre, Museums and public Libraries, and how cultural heritage is creating a digital net.

Highlights of the Zagreb City library were described by Zdenka Sviben from the Library's I&R Department. Two that she talked about were the Croatian Book Month which has been running nationally since 1995 and includes almost all Croatian libraries, and another long running program called "Don't Google – Ask a librarian."

Day 1's theme was *Communication*. The first presentation under this theme was by Assumpta Bailac from the Barcelona Library. The library service in Barcelona has undertaken a huge improvement in the past 10 years thanks to their strategic planning and now they are looking to maintain and build on this growth with their new strategic plan, Biblioteques de Barcelona: 10 anys+ (Barcelona libraries: 10 years more) Since 1998, they have doubled the number of libraries and increased by 5 times

the space, increased by 3 times opening hours, 5 times visits and 45% membership. Their aim was to become the municipal service best appreciated by citizens. They are now articulating their goals for 2010 – 2020 and have used a participative process with 50 people including architects, sociologists, publishers and librarians. They have looked at 3 areas: the users, the physical content and the future of buildings. Barcelona has seen an improvement in all their cultural institutions over the past 10 years. The main themes for their new plan are: Open learning centre; recuperate reading; digital library – creating content; and access to the city through the library card. They are concerned to have a quality offering and share the values of international libraries and are intergenerational, inter cultural and aim to provide access to every citizen.

Anna Raunik from the State Library of Queensland talked about how the library has joined Flickr Commons, which has as its goals to enable access to the treasures of photography archives and to facilitate community comments and tagging to these collections. The community has responded to the collection with enthusiasm and Anna gave the following example:

A photograph of an old house in Toowoomba dated 1905 was added to the site, with a small amount of information provided by the library. One person traced the street on Google street view and ascertained the house was still standing and also gave a more detailed history with a link to where more information could be found. Anna also described The Edge, a digital culture centre that is a place for experimentation and creativity, providing contemporary tools to allow new design practices and media making. A video describing the Edge is available at <http://edgeqld.org.au/edge-tv/>

Digital libraries featured in the presentations and the Deputy Director of the National Library of Albania talked about how her library was undertaking a digitisation program and the role that the national and metropolitan libraries are building a national digital memory that makes national heritage easier to be consulted, referring to the European Council's "A common access point for Europe's digital cultural heritage." Etleva Domi's main message was that "Digital libraries are the wave of the past, present and future."

A presentation by staff from Zagreb City libraries described the methodology for instituting the digitisation program that is preserving many rare and valuable works of cultural heritage. The role of the Digital Library is aiming to ensure accessibility, usage and preservation. This practical presentation provided a road map for libraries looking to institute a digital library with examples and processes to follow.

Hatidza Demirovic from Sarajevo gave a history of the Sarajevo library over its 60 years of existence. She described the growth period, the destruction and shutdown due to war, the application of new technologies, the reopening of the library and their future plans. The integral role the library played for the people of the city during the war years was very movingly described, and highlighted how the library provided a place of escape and refuge.

Day 2 of the conference had as its theme *Meeting Places*. The presentation by Sharon Thien from the National Library Board of Singapore described how they are using the interest being generated by the Singapore 2010 Youth Olympic Games to promote the library's collections and programs. Another presentation by Josephine Siegrist

described the new intercultural branch library in Zurich that serves the local primary and secondary schools and the local college as well as the community. It targets the population of non-Swiss first language background who live in the surrounding housing estates. There are 10 languages in the collection which comprise a third of the total stock.

Liv Sateren, Director of the Oslo City Library gave a progress report on the planning for a new Central library which will be sited between the new Opera House and the main railway station. The site was finally chosen after 26 sites were looked at; the library has been 20 years in the planning. The vision is that that the library will inspire and keep Oslo awake and will be the most innovative, visible and available library and public space in Europe. Children, youngsters and adults shall be tempted with a manifold, attractive and surprising universe of information sources. It will encourage active sharing of culture and knowledge and inspire users to take delight in reading. It will be a place of free debate and exchange of opinions in the library. The building is planned to commence in 2013.



Xia Lei from Shanghai Public Library described the new document delivery and interlibrary loan service that has been implemented, making accessible the collections at every branch to people all over the city.

Inga Lunden talked about the subway libraries and ideas libraries they are building in Stockholm. She started her talk by asking “Where is the library?” - is it at work, home, coffee shop or pocket? She used the analogy of the radio in the time of iPods – why do people still listen to the radio? It is because the radio gives new music in context, and Inga suggests that the library should be like that, staging the unexpected meeting – for example, contemporary authors meeting their soul mates (old authors) in the stacks. There are 3 subway libraries in Stockholm that provide a third space for people on their way to work or on their way home. The City’s Transport Department conducted a survey of what people wanted in subways and the major response was libraries.

Marjan Marinkovic from Belgrade City Library described the program the city ran with support from the USAID/SEGA Project for Strengthening Citizens’ Financial

Literacy. The project consisted of two segments; training for librarians to conduct financial literacy workshops and the development of a website with the same purpose. The primary target group was high school students. Fifteen librarians passed the training in the basics of financial literacy and methodology for working with high school students. The training was led by SEGA's financial experts and introduced basic financial concepts – common financial products, the importance of saving, risk and return in investment and the right to receive accurate information while investing.

Day 4's theme was *Integration and Inclusion*. Jeff Barber, from Regina Library in Canada, and Chair of the Canadian Urban Library Council, described a toolkit that has been developed by the Council that audits the social inclusiveness of libraries. This major research project has taken 2 years to complete and the Audit consists of 12 questions / outcome statements that the library responds to. Canada has a high level of immigration and around 250,000 people per annum are moving to Canada, 70% to the major cities of Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. The tool intends to permit self assessment, however it is recommended that it be done by peers or an external body. It requires 2 measurement points, the current status and progress over time. The Audit measures 3 indications with 12 questions:

Openness – how well the library knows the community

Intentionality – how well principles are reinforced

Inclusion – how well the library **is** the community.

A presentation from Mr Ramadan Beshiri of the Ministry of Culture in Kosovo described how his country has 332 libraries for a population of 2.5 million people. Kosovo is made up of 92% Albanians and 6% Serbs. They are developing a national strategy for their libraries and are working in cooperation with libraries in Albania, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Rotterdam Public Library has as its mission “supporting people” and the library aims to inspire and stimulate the search for knowledge and information and promote the enjoyment of reading and language. Language is the key element for people to be able to participate in society. Public libraries have a low entry threshold and they are close to many neighbourhoods. The library is investing in e-centres that provide study centres; preschool, school, and adult literacy programs; and stimulates language skills for reading enjoyment and media awareness. Rotterdam is a very multi cultural city with 600,000 inhabitants and 170 nationalities. 47% of the population are immigrants. 60% of the immigrants are juveniles and 22% have low literacy. The library runs civic integration programs where people can learn the Dutch language and about Dutch society so they can actively participate in life in the Netherlands. The City has devised a participation ladder:

Paid labour
Paid labour with support
Non paid labour
Participate in organised activities
Social involvement in society
Isolation

65,000 people have taken part in the civic integration program in Rotterdam. The online program has as its components:

- (Better) reading and writing (there is a low threshold into the program, and special literacy collections badged “Read and Write”, also DVDs and computer programs)
- Integration
- Work and job applications (language traineeships, work placements, employment coaching, workshops to help people find a job)

An example of a youth program is the SMS poetry competition the library runs where young people write poems of exactly 160 characters.

Kaie Holm from Tallinn Central Library in Estonia described how the library is assisting people to join their online society. The population of Estonia is 1.3 million and 403,000 people live in the capital, Tallinn. Last year, 92% of the population filed electronic tax returns, 11% voted online, 300,000 people use eschool daily and everyone has a digital signature. The library plays an important role in ensuring people are not being left behind and their *Come Along!* program will provide training for 100,000 people and connect another 50,000 to the internet. The aim of the program is to minimise barriers to internet access. 14 librarians are mentors in the program which offers 80 basic courses.

Day 5’s theme was *Business excellence*. Barbara Clubb from Ottawa Public Library described the organisational restructure that has been recently undertaken there. The change drivers for the library were external, as the City was also undertaking a restructure; and internal, as the structure that had been in place for 10 years was no longer appropriate for the strategic direction of the library. The structure of the library service is now based on 3 areas:

- Service Excellence
- Staff Engagement
- Sustainability

and has 3 divisions, System Wide Service Delivery and Innovation; Service Excellence; and Facilities and Business Services.

The Walt Disney Institute was used as consultants, and Barbara pointed out the similarities between libraries and the Disneyland theme parks:

- Many business lines
- Public service orientation
- Services in many languages
- Perceived value on part of client
- Point of contact/first impressions
- Behind the scenes staff
- Value for service-investment
- Thrive on repeat business
 - 70% for Disney
- Guests/clients are made to feel special
- ?? Revenue, Growth, Profitability ??

Gladys Maharam described a leadership program she has developed for the Office of Commonwealth Libraries (Pennsylvania) that is offered online and provides practical tools and resources for directors of small public libraries to improve their skills and knowledge.

Christine Mackenzie from Yarra Plenty Regional Library presented on a Victorian statewide project called *Being the Best We Can* which focuses on planning and continuous improvement. It was developed by a workgroup of Victorian public librarians, State Library staff, consultants from Australian Continuous Improvement Group, and Rhona Arthur and Elaine Fulton from the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC), the independent advisory body to the Scottish Government on library matters. YPRL was one of the pilot sites and undertook the process from April – July 09. The presentation described the project and outcomes.

The final presentation was by Jens Ingermann, the Director of the Copenhagen City Library. He described how the library has implemented the Lean methodology of activity based costing to establish the real costs of providing different services. Activity based costing (ABC) gives the real cost of a service, for example a book loan consists of the purchase of the book, the material processing, but also the cost of the facility, IT etc. ABC is an analysis of the actual resource consumption while Lean is a method or a tool to improve working procedures, make them more efficient and/or give a better service. Copenhagen has used the data to create different views for management, for example the cost of a loan by branch, the cost of actual services and the cost of activities. It was pointed out that this process makes it easier to have conversations with staff about efficiency and takes the emotion out of this.

General discussion during the conference centred on the following themes:

1. School libraries

The presentation by Zurich Public Library on their joint use library provoked discussion on the relationships between schools and public libraries. In Rotterdam there are no school libraries and library staff go into schools to run programs for students. In Zurich, all schools have libraries and the Government wants public libraries to have a greater presence and come into the schools. In Latvia there is good co operation and schools come and run special lessons in libraries. In Sweden there is a push to improve school libraries and also to better define the roles of the school and public library. In Canada schools are being re-envisioned as community hubs, with children as the heart of the school, and public libraries are still deciding how to respond and interact with them.

2. Staff - training courses; the changing role of librarians; succession planning

Discussion followed the presentation by the Tallinn Public Library, where library staff are training people how to use their ID cards, there are potential issues with library staff knowing PIN numbers and identity numbers.

Sources of funding for programs and activities were discussed and Halifax has been successful in obtaining funding from the Justice Department to provide training and other programs for marginalised youth.

Another topic was the change in role of library staff now that materials handling has decreased because of self service and RFID. There has been a definite shift in the perception of library staff now that many libraries no longer use staff for checking out materials. The fall in reference enquiries was also a common theme and discussion

ensued about the role of the reference librarian. Some libraries are engaging other disciplines (eg Yarra Plenty Regional Library has a Youth Worker and a Storyteller) and others are encouraging staff to acquire new skills.

Succession planning was another topic of interest to delegates. Queens Public Library has a 3 year plan, which involves mentoring and coaching. Toronto Public Library has a pool of candidates who are ready to step up and uses job rotation, assignments to projects and mentoring. Prague has 20 – 25 task teams that are focussed on special issues, described as a laboratory of management skills. Copenhagen utilises the city wide staff development opportunities and integrates library staff with other council areas to ensure that the library staff are not seen as isolated. Pittsburgh provides project management training for staff undertaking projects.

3. Measuring outcomes and evaluating programs

In response to the question about how the value of integration services can be calculated, the Canadian Urban Library Council toolkit provides a methodology to establish a Return on Investment. Zurich has studied how effective their programs are and evaluated systematically. Riga has been the beneficiary of Gates Foundation money and there has been very deep analysis of the effectiveness of reading programs there. Toronto has also developed a way of measuring outcomes by the improvement in literacy scores for children by testing before and after summer reading programs. Montreal uses “scholarship maturity” as a measure; ie whether children are ready for school. Immigrants especially are afraid to send their children to kindergarten and there are plans to measure their school readiness and the impact that libraries have made. Ottawa is undertaking measurements of young children and literacy, and linking programs to research, for example it has been proven that there are better outcomes if children are read to from a young age.

Visits to libraries and cultural institutions

The conference also included a number of visits to public and other libraries in Croatia. Of particular interest were the visits to Zadar City Library and Juraj Sisgoric City library.

Zadar City Library has been in its current building for about 10 years and it is a real hub of the community. Over 1,000 activities take place in the library each year, and when we visited there was a musical performance happening in the courtyard, families were gathered watching a soccer game and there was a great sense of belonging and familiarity with the library and staff.

The Juraj Sisgoric library in Sibenik is a new building of 2,800 sq m and is very architecturally impressive. Founded in 1922, it was relocated to the centre of the city in 2005. The library space enabled the introduction of new content: an audiovisual department, computer workshop, playroom, multimedia hall, art gallery, study reading room, etc. The building is very “fit for purpose” and is the central point of cultural and social events in Šibenik.

Other libraries visited during the conference were the Library of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Bogdan Orgrizovic Library, the Faculty of

Humanities and Social Science library and the National and University library. There was also an excursion to the New Museum of Krapina Neanderthals. We were guided over this museum, the most modern on this subject in Europe, by the architect and the designer of the museum, which interprets the archaeological discovery in 1899 of a population of Neanderthals at Krapina.

The hosts for our conference, the Director of the Zagreb City Library, Davorka Bastic and Tatjana Nebesny from the R&D Department, are to be congratulated on an excellent professional program and a rich and enlightening view of their City and their country.

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