



**The red thread – New central Library in Hjoerring, Denmark**

**Tone Lunden**  
Hjoerring Library  
Hjoerring, Denmark

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**The red thread**  
New Central library in Hjoerring, Denmark



Tone Lunden, Hjoerring Library  
IFLA 2009 in Milan

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**Abstract:**

*Hjoerring central library is a public library situated in the north of Denmark. The library is the central library in a municipality with 67,102 inhabitants and we have 4 branches and a mobile library as well. We had been in the same building since 1971 and needed more space, which we luckily got in April 2008. The library's identity is reflected in the red ribbon, winding through the room like veins. We imagined the library as a theatre – “the stage” where the users meet the magic of the library and get the chance to interact – “the store of set pieces” to ring the changes and “the backstage” for the staff.*

*Besides the theatre we are inspired by the way museums, science centres and similar places mediate and interact with their patrons. We thought of the library as one of “the great good places” mentioned by Ray Oldenburg and also worked with inspiration from the Danish architect Jan Gehl about multiplicity and diversity in city planning.*

## **Introduction**

Dear colleagues, I am a children’s librarian from a town called Hjoerring in the north of Denmark. In 2007 we were sure to have a new central library, situated in a shopping centre with 40 shops. The library opened in 2008 and I will present the whole library, quite short and then focus on the children’s department. I will present some thoughts from the building process and also examples from daily life. And I will do this with a lot of photos and 3 short videos.

Two milk, one dress, a pillow and three books – “shopping” in the library and a library in a shopping centre.



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Two milk, one dress, a pillow and three books – “shopping” in the library and a library in a shopping centre.

We invited the artist duo Bosch & Fjord whose mutual wish is to integrate art as a natural part of everyday life and combine art, design and architecture in their work. Their intention was to make the library in Hjoerring “the pivotal point of the town”. We also invited Lammhults Library Design with their international experience in fitting out library interiors.



Rosan Bosch and Rune Fjord Jensen

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Thoughts, visions, experiences and inspiration were mixed, and we completed the concrete plans in August 2007 and opened in April 2008.



Welcome...:)

4

I will now show you a short video with a dancer and local children dancing their way through the library.

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The library is the central library in a municipality with 67,102 inhabitants and we have 4 branches and a mobile library as well. The central library also has a Tourist Information. The library's identity is reflected in the red ribbon, winding through the room like veins. Going

up and down, through and underneath sometimes a bench, sometimes shelves, table, desk or spaces for exhibitions.



5

We have many different kinds of furniture for sitting down – by oneself or in a group. We have study rooms, quiet zones and activity zones and no dividing line between sections for different ages. The library occupies one room, but contains many “rooms” with different expressions and the red thread is linking the different parts.

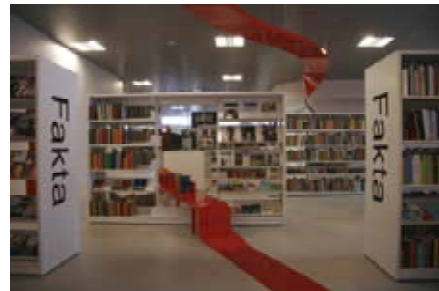


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In the welcome area you will find new books and other media for all ages, a lounge with screens in different sizes for TV, showing exhibitions or weather forecasts. Also Tourist Information, café and the area for borrowing/returning and information. Further on study rooms, theme niches in vivid orange colour for exhibitions, TV lounge, bookcases from floor to ceiling, showing books or magazines like a bookstore and with ladders to climb up.



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All our media are in open shelves – nothing stored away in cellars. In the area with elder books the setting changes from modern white to mahogany and Chesterfield chairs.



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In the children's department we wanted to express even more strongly the idea that experience includes the whole body. As a symbol we placed a "rollercoaster-bookcase" in the middle of the library. We have areas for action and areas that offer more silent pursuits – like the Reading Tubes.



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It is also evident that children have possibilities to express themselves. They can make a simple animation, sing a song, tell a story or recommend a book in the video box and afterwards see the result on a big screen.



12

I will now show you one animation inspired by a Greenland exhibition and a very international song “Mamma Mia”.

We have participated in different Nordic projects like “Leaving Marks” with support from Nordic Culture Point and a Danish project “Children’s library as an exploratory”. Experience from these projects were integrated in this new library. Another top priority is play – we have toys and room for children’s own play culture. The library is a good place for “crossing” ages!



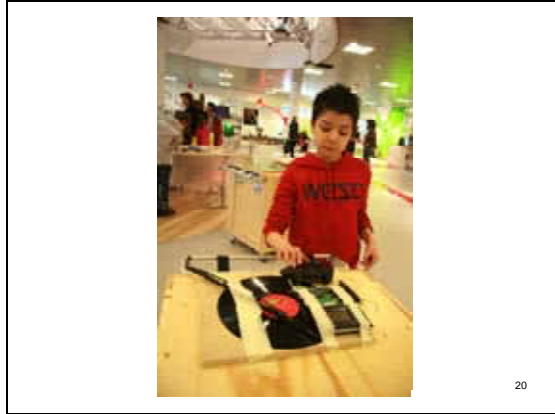
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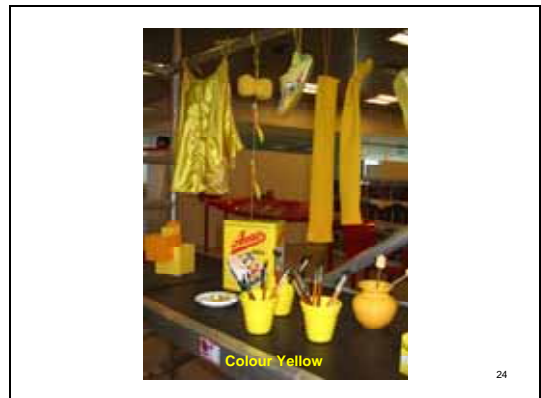
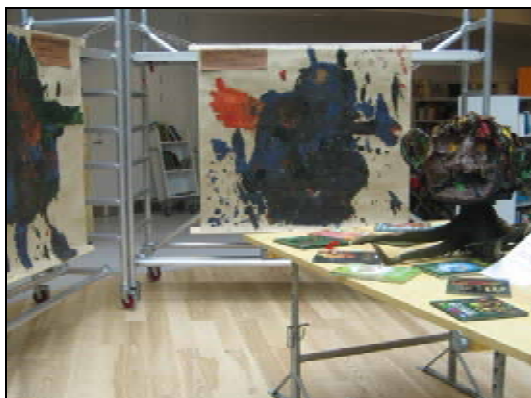


Big snakes inside the box!



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There is a big area for exhibitions and different workshops with for example painting for children in different ages. There we have theatre lamps, projectors, screens, scaffoldings, costumes and other equipment. We work with themes as Colour Yellow, Trolls, Birds and Frogs, Sculptures and we cooperate with teachers and artists.



Colour Yellow

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Panorama – Colour Yellow

25

The area for picture books is built up like a park with a tree, so the whole year round you can sit or lie in the park reading books. That is very nice with a climate like the Danish one!



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We also have a V.I.P. lounge = Very Important Parents with magazines, books about children but also about gardening, marriage, cars or knitting. Here we “shop” books from other departments.



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In our former library we had separate sections – kids to the left and adults to the right. In the new library we wanted to mix ages and work with keywords like: surprise, interaction, possibilities and new ways of mediating. We have a monthly theme with exhibitions on the red ribbon with media for all ages, like Greenland or Human Rights. And we often go browsing in the centre for accessories, sometimes we buy to keep in stock and sometimes we even borrow. And the location in the “Metropol – shopping and lifestyle” also gives us new customers. We have approximately 1200 visitors daily, people of all ages, alone or with school, kindergarten or other groups.



We are now, with grants from the Danish Agency for Library and Media working with our customers' way of using the library in a project called “Walking the library”. We will use RFID and tags combined with interviews to spot for example what people do at the library, where they go and how long they stay. This is a development project together with Aalborg University and the Royal School of Library and Information Science.

We are very proud to be on the list of the best libraries in Europe, as well as of our customers' statements such as “we are so happy about our tax money being spent on a place like this” and “this must be a fabulous place to work”. And it is!



Photos: Bosch & Fjord [www.bosch-fjord.com](http://www.bosch-fjord.com) and Hjoerring Library