



What's going on?

Public libraries operate in a drastically new context. The rise of information technology is having an enormous impact, but that is not all that's going on. The behaviour of users is changing, the diversity in society is increasing and trends are emerging in rapid succession. The library will have to respond adequately to new questions and needs in society.

Going with the flow of society means continually developing ideas, continually innovating. Permanent innovation is imperative, but what exactly does that mean? And how can we guarantee the quality of that innovation? Working together and sharing knowledge will help us move ahead. By combining brainpower, knowledge and creativity and linking innovation projects nationwide, we can enhance the quality of innovation and its chances of success. But how can we ensure inclusion?

Meanwhile, new colleagues are entering the profession, people trained at different higher professional and university education levels. They bring with them new approaches, knowledge and qualities that are of huge value to the innovation process. Are these new colleagues our future innovators? If that is the case, we will have to impart the identity and core values of public library work to them. How can we best achieve that? And how can we ensure that, rather than becoming isolated from other employees, they are capable of inspiring them?

makes innovation work
and creates knowledge

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The answers to these questions can be found in the new Library School, a School with a pioneering new approach that blends learning, working and innovating. The Library School will train future innovators but is also a community where students and colleagues share knowledge and gain new insights and so take library innovation forward. By establishing a direct link with everyday library practice, the School contributes to enhancing the innovative capacity of the sector as a whole.

A new librarian

The new library seeks to enlist the economic, cultural and social participation of citizens in society, for which it needs librarians who can combine social awareness, creativity and cultural knowledge with management skills, knowledge of digital developments and the ability to enter into alliances. Within the force field of culture, society and technology, this new librarian is constantly on the lookout for the added value and excellence the library can offer, always acting on the basis of the core values and identity of library work.

The librarian of the future is able to innovate the discipline based on content. Not single-handedly, but together with employees, other libraries and social partners. This requires talent as well as a large measure of professionalism and expertise. The Library School offers a curriculum that responds to these challenges and does justice to the resulting learning questions. However, the School also plays a key role in library innovation by creating a virtual learning environment in which students, colleagues and library organisations from around the country can exchange knowledge and insights.



School characteristics

The School is intended for employees who have completed higher professional or university education and who have an executive position in a public library. A wide range of preliminary educational programmes qualify, because it is precisely the students' own knowledge and inspiration that makes it possible to approach themes and issues from different perspectives. In order to establish an immediate link with library practice, students will bring with them an innovative project from their own library. Key issues of the School are experiencing, reflecting on, transferring knowledge and experimenting. The educational programme comprises three distinctive learning routes:

- a generic curriculum comprising subjects such as library sciences and the study of literature, and social and cultural orientation;
- a thematic curriculum that focuses on a different topical theme every year;
- the students' own study assignments resulting from their individual innovation projects.

The idea is to train approximately 15 students a year. Study duration is flexible, but averages 2.5 to 3 years. Discussions are being held with the Open University whether it would be possible to attach a Master's title to the Library School.

Learning method

At the School, learning, working and innovating will blend together. That comes with an innovative learning method that guarantees the actual transfer of new insights to everyday library practice. To that end, the School has contacted the Open University's Centre for Learning, Sciences and Technology (CELSTEC) to discuss co-operation. CELSTEC specialises in learning methods for adults, more specifically in learning processes in a virtual environment. CELSTEC's expertise is applied to the completion of a Library Learning Network, an online learning network for knowledge sharing and knowledge development supported by experts and coaches who further enhance the learning processes and actively encourage knowledge sharing between the participants.

What will the School deliver?

The School is a network of people who want to learn and innovate, to which they will each contribute their knowledge and expertise. This approach will have the following deliverables:

- Highly trained and inspired librarians who will take on the role of innovator, who know what it is to permanently innovate and who can introduce the required knowledge and skills in their own library.
- A serious, scientific reflection on innovation and innovation projects in the public library sector, improving the quality and effectiveness of the projects.

The Academy of Athens was a place to reflect, to discover the workings of the world together and to gain new insights. The central figures are Plato and Aristotle. Plato is pointing upward, to the higher source of inspiration that is the world of ideas. Aristotle, on the other hand, points to the earth as the starting point of all natural sciences. This learning community, in which individuals were connected through common themes and issues, serves as a source of inspiration for the Library School.

- Interconnection of innovative projects, as a result of which the quality of innovation in the sector will improve as well.
- Last but not least: an appealing perspective for current and future librarians in that an attractive job is combined with a challenging learning environment.

Schedule

The first pilot group will start in September 2009. This first group will actively contribute to the design of the School's curriculum. The students will thoroughly test the new method of learning and innovating. The experiences in the pilot will be used to make adjustments and improvements, with the official launch following in 2010.

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