

World Library and Information Congress: 75th IFLA General Conference and Assembly, Milan, Italy 23-27 August 2009

Satellite Meeting: Libraries as Space and Place, Turin, Italy 19-21 August 2009

**Physical Space in Theory and Beyond:
Building Libraries for the Knowledge Societies**

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Introduction

Since the discussion about the physical space of the library took a great step forward in the last years we don't need to talk about the reasons for the 'renaissance of the library as place' anymore. In my eyes it seems more fruitful to discuss the relevance of theoretical deliberations for library architecture and practical librarianship before the background of the evolving knowledge societies. But let me state two important findings of the ongoing discussions first:

- It is not possible to separate the physical and virtual space of the library anymore even if some apologists of the Web 2.0-Library and some conservative voices are still trying to do so.
- The library may become an important place in the knowledge societies but it is not the exclusive space e.g. for informational participation.

Keeping this in mind we can go on to discuss the role of the library as space and place in the knowledge societies. This issue – like many topics in LIS – is often divided in a scholarly debate and a discussion of projects and best practice examples. A conference like this offers the opportunity to initiate a dialogue between theory and practice in this field. Therefore it is necessary to get some background information about the topical concepts and to discuss clear cut definitions for the basic terms of these concepts. Otherwise we need best practice examples and projects to learn about possible ways to reach the common goal of better library spaces for the knowledge societies. My aim is to present both theoretical remarks and exemplary implementations in one paper in order to find a sustainable and self-evident role for library spaces in the nexus of digital and physical – global and local.

Therefore I will start with a short introduction into the concept of knowledge societies and with some remarks on theoretical approaches to library space. The second part of my paper deals with the question of possible transformation into practice. I argue that it is not necessary to design grand new library buildings in cooperation with the world's top ten architects to get a good library space but that the quality is often in the detail. Concepts combining different elements to new coherent spaces should be developed by librarians and architects in close cooperation. The guiding principle of this process has to be the best possible response to the needs of the local community and its individuals.

Knowledge societies and libraries

During the last decade “knowledge society” and “information society” became buzz phrases in political discussions and LIS. In most cases they are used synonymic or the concepts behind the terms are intermingled. As early as the 1970s this began with the publications of Daniel Bell about the post-industrial society. In his 1973 study *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* he uses the term knowledge society for one crucial aspect of the post-industrial society, the importance of scientific knowledge and information [Bell 1973, p. 345]. More usually he turns to the term information society in his later publications.

The significant difference between the two concepts is the human factor. Information society is a technologically and economically based concept referring to the changes caused by the so called informational or digital revolution. Information is measurable and can be distributed in different ways regardless of its semantic context. Although knowledge is communicated through information it is a context based phenomenon which requires understanding and not only decoding. Therefore for most scholars it is an exclusively human concept strongly related to individual and collective memory and wisdom. For this reason most theories about information society turn out to be technocratic or solely economic without a real sociological background.

In his 1994 publication *Knowledge Societies* Nico Stehr defines his subject as “the result of human action but not of deliberate human design” [Stehr, 1994, p. 16]. Knowledge becomes a crucial factor in economy as well as in other fields of society but this development is not exactly predictable because of the ‘human’ nature of knowledge and the pluralism and contingency of the global knowledge societies. In this context UNESCO extrapolates a new social responsibility

“Knowledge societies are about capabilities to identify, produce, process, transform, disseminate and use information to build and apply knowledge for human development. They require an empowering social vision that encompasses plurality, inclusion, solidarity and participation” [UNESCO, 2005, p. 27].

It becomes obvious that information is only a vehicle for the distribution and a resource for the production of knowledge but not the thing itself. Even so it derives from the economic and technological discussion about post-industrial societies; the concept of knowledge societies has been becoming a sociological fact which is in need of explanation [Bittlingmayer, 2005, p.48].

Both, Stehr and UNESCO use the plural ‘knowledge societies’ instead of a singular like for example ‘industrial society’. There are different reasons for this uncommon use of a term describing society:

- it is not a normative concept
- it is a global concept considering different cultural and social backgrounds
- therefore it is a pluralistic approach
- it is not static but emphasises the contingency of contemporary societies

Especially the fact that there are other influential terms like service society, media society or network(ed) society gives us evidence, that a pluralistic, non-normative concept may be an appropriate way to understand the developments and challenges of contemporary societies. Furthermore it makes things easier in an international context.

Critics are right when they are stating, that knowledge societies seem to be quite inconsistent in many ways. The differentiation of information and knowledge does not simplify matters. At least there are three main paradoxes we should keep in mind when talking about knowledge societies:

1. Information paradox:
The more context-free information exists in our environment the more important context-bound knowledge becomes. [Läpple, 2004]
2. Location paradox:
The bigger and easier to transact logistics becomes the higher the local integration of a business is valued. [Porter, 1999]
3. Social inclusion paradox:
The easier access to information becomes the more less-educated social groups are excluded. [Suchanek, 2006]

After all it is not easy to come to a clear cut definition of knowledge societies. Most definitions like that of UNESCO are formulated in dissociation of other concepts like information society:

“The idea of the information society is based on technological breakthroughs. The concept of knowledge societies encompasses much broader social, ethical and political dimensions. There is a multitude of such dimensions which rules out the idea of any single, ready-made model, for such a model would not take sufficient account of cultural and linguistic diversity, vital if individuals are to feel at home in a changing world.” [UNESCO, 2005, p. 17]

In his concluding remarks Stehr differentiates knowledge societies from industrial society and argues that the problem of clear definition is not only an epistemological one but an individual dilemma as well:

“The promise, challenge and dilemma knowledge societies pose for every individual derives from the need to cope with and even welcome greater transience and volatility, the recognition that uncertainty is a necessary by-product of the search for any elimination of disagreements and the need to accept the transitoriness of virtually any social constructs.” [Stehr, 1994, p.262]

Stehr underlines the preliminaryity of the whole concept as well as the importance of individual flexibility in the knowledge societies. On this basis I would like to suggest a positive definition: ‘Knowledge societies’ is a concept for the transforming global societies characterized by a new approach to knowledge based on an inclusive participatory character of society and facilitated by the new information technologies. The concept is not limited by social, cultural or economic borders because it is based on universal human rights and includes different forms of knowledge and skills.

Although ‘knowledge societies’ is not a normative concept it seems to be quite idealistic because it is strongly influenced by ideas of the Enlightenment. Therefore new forms of educational and cultural governance as well as new public places have to be developed in order to meet the challenges of today’s globally networked societies. Libraries should consider their role in this context from different perspectives. Let me introduce some recent approaches to the space of the library in terms of their possible usefulness for this goal.

Library spaces for the knowledge societies

The so called ‘Renaissance’ of the library space is not only a material rebirth in bricks and mortar but a scholarly phenomenon with a lot of new approaches to the library as place. At least two classes of ideas can be identified:

The functional or practical concepts like

- learning space
- idea store
- médiathèque
- web 2.0 library
- meeting place

The idealistic or philosophical ideas like

- sacred space
- communal space
- societal space

Let me try a short introduction of each concept in the context of knowledge societies.

Learning Space

A reflection on the library as a learning space results in different perspectives of the topic with additional regional, cultural and social differentiations. In some countries the library may be the only physical space for learning and sharing information in a non-institutional context. Other societies offer a wide range of possibilities and it becomes crucial for libraries to deal with different partners in lifelong learning and education. A lot of librarians and LIS scholars have been dealing with different concepts of learning spaces in the last decade. Three main perspectives of the library as a learning space can be identified in the literature:

- the communal, silent study environment
- the high-tech learning centre, and
- the open learning space.

The ideal way of designing a working learning centre would be adding them all together to a comprehensive, multifunctional space.

Within the context of knowledge societies learning has been changing from education of children and young adults to a lifelong process. Therefore adult-learning and informal-learning have been becoming more and more important in the last decades. Individual disposition and information skills, professional support and adequate infrastructures and spaces are the main factors for a successful learning process. As learning spaces, libraries support these transformations by teaching information skills, answering the individual demands of their users and offering learning infrastructures. Bargellini and Bordoni draw the conclusion that libraries can “greatly contribute to the transition from an information to a knowledge society” [Bargellini and Bordoni, 2001, p. 157]. No matter if there is such a transformation or not – I would prefer to speak of two concurrent concepts – it is true that multifunctional spaces as described above are useful learning infrastructures for knowledge societies.

Idea Store

Since the Idea Store is not a theoretical deliberation but a practical concept, it became very popular especially in Germany, where in some of the federal states multifunctional

community centres have been build at least in the 1970s and 1980s. The difference is that these concepts mostly arranged various institutions under one roof instead of really combining the functions in one space. The Idea Store is not a classical library but a community centre offering different educational and cultural services. The concept is flexible enough to serve different communities like less educated people with migratory backgrounds and well educated staff from the nearby financial districts.

The concept of the Idea Store takes up three perspectives of the debate about knowledge societies:

- the need for open, inviting spaces
- the cooperation of cultural, social and educational institutions
- the respect for different cultural backgrounds within the context of an open, democratic society

Médiathèque

The concept of the Médiathèque has been developed in 1970s France. It is based on the four basic factors building, holdings, professional staff and cultural mission. It is not only a library but offers other media than only books as well, which seems to be a matter of course today but has been very progressive in the 1970s. The ‘classic’ médiathèque has been characterized by an educational concept, trying to teach people to find the right information fitting their needs as citizens. This is much more a republican idea of the well educated citizen than an open space for the whole community regardless of the social, cultural and educational background [see Bertrand e.a., 2008].

In the knowledge societies such a concept seems to be a little bit old fashioned and not fitting the challenges of a pluralistic and contingent social environment any more. Consequentially the Médiathèque of the 1970s has been replaced by a user-orientated concept with a high standard of technology and service today.

Web 2.0 Library

The Web 2.0 Library is not a coherent concept but a mixture of different, technology-orientated ideas about the possible future of libraries in the so called Web 2.0 Age. What seems to be only a trendy phenomenon at first sight turns out to have some potential especially in its social and democratic visions. For example the idea of informational

participation in the digital space is an important contribution to the discussion about the different spaces in the knowledge societies. On the other hand the term is not really an including one because it sets a group of well educated, young people as a standard for the whole population of the knowledge societies. I don't want to go too deep into this discussion here, but let me mention that the terms 'internet generation' or 'digitally born' with all their limitations and inaccuracies are very much related to the Web 2.0 Library [see c.f. Palfrey and Gasser, 2008].

Therefore the technological implementations like online interaction, user-generated content or new applications turn out to be more useful than the sometimes confused or at least nonreflective deliberations of the Web 2.0 apologists. This is the main reason for my decision to subsume the Web 2.0 Library to the functional concepts. Important tools related to space are for example:

- new forms of communication and interaction
- second life environments
- social networks
- virtual library tours

Meeting Place

The idea of the library as a meeting place belongs to the more practical concepts as well as to the idealistic deliberations because on one hand it is an idea for a new design of libraries as meeting places for the community on the other hand it offers a sophisticated sociological approach to the knowledge societies. The idea of the library as a meeting place is not a new one. In 1980s Germany for example public libraries used the idea of the meeting place for their image campaign "*Wir sehen uns in der Stadtbücherei*" ("*Let's meet at the city library*").

But the concept is not so much about meeting friends or peers inside the library. Instead it is based on the idea of a communal arena:

"Without arenas and a public sphere where a discourse can take place across social and cultural borders, one cannot reach decisions based on democratic deliberation. The absence of such arenas will probably also make it difficult to establish that degree of cross-cultural tolerance that democracy presupposes."
[Audunson, 2005, 433]

Therefore it is more fruitful for the outcome of this intended process when people with different backgrounds meet by chance rather than coming together purposefully. The arena associates the ancient Greek agora which has been a very sophisticated space exclusively

open for male aristocratic elite. The main difference is that the arena is not only open for everyone but it is literally a space for social conflicts and performances taking place in a very special setting. This is the idealistic part of the concept because unintended contacts between people of different social, cultural and educational backgrounds are not regularly leading to intensive and positive communication.

Sacred Space

In his 2005 article *The Library as Place* Geoffrey T. Freeman emphasizes the psychosocial and representative aspects of the library building both for the whole campus community and for the individual student [Freeman, 2005]. Identification with a common mission and a sense of community are typically associated with religious communions. So it seems obvious to compare the library of a college or university with a church. This idea is associated with the “oomph or wow factor” [McDonald, 2007, p. 14], which is about individual inspiration and the spirit of the community as well.

Consequently Hahn and Jackson used evaluation methodologies from the field of psychology of religions for their 2008 survey on academic libraries as sanctified spaces [Hahn and Jackson, 2008]. They presented their subjects a series of images showing exterior, interior and items of different ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ style libraries with a set of questions concerning the usage of the library space and the collection.

The main finding of this survey is that the library itself and its collections are more valued by the students when it has a ‘traditional’ design, associated with spirituality or church architecture. Otherwise modern-style libraries are less appropriate to evoke feelings of identification with the community and its goals and missions. To me the association of ‘traditional’ architecture with transcendence seems to be a little stereotypical. In fact, the iconography of libraries is, to a certain degree, linked with that of Christian churches but there are other types of library spaces as well associated with the ideas of Enlightenment or ancient ideals of space for example the mentioned arena or the theatre. On the other hand, some modernists have been well aware of the ‘spiritual’ aspects of their architecture. Le Corbusier and van der Rohe are only the most prominent examples.

Therefore I do not absolutely agree with the conclusion of Hahn and Jackson.

“One could argue that because those elements students feel most positive about are those they sanctify, they then ascribe spirituality to the goals those things support. We feel it is more the former though,

because if the latter were the case you would expect to see all images of academic libraries being designated as spiritual, not just those with traditional architecture.” [Hahn and Jackson, 2008, p. 9]

Looking at their data, this seems to be true for the feelings evoked by the architecture but not to the same degree for the usage of the library itself. Some representative halls and auditoria of the campus may evoke such feelings as well. But there is another aspect of the concept and that is the role of the library building within the campus plan. The place of the library on a planned campus often corresponds to the place of the abbey-church in the ideal plan of St. Gallen monastery, which has been most influential for the construction of convents all over Europe since the Middle Ages. So maybe the role of the library space within the community is not so much linked with its traditional or modern architecture but more likely with its location on the campus.

However within the context of knowledge societies we will have to ask if the spiritual aspect of library space can help us to design the environments in a way that affects people and makes it easier for them to identify with this place.

Communal Space

Another concept of the library as a space for identification is the idea of the communal space, as stated by Gayton in his 2008 article *Academic Libraries: “Social” or “Communal?”* The communal space of the library is defined by the quiet study in the presence of others. It’s a feeling of being part of a community of students and scholars. This feeling is not being evoked by talking to each other or collaborative work but by the very presence of other individuals in the same space [see Gayton, 2008, p. 61]. Gayton is not the first one to define this communal space but he develops it by a comparison with the social space.

Like Demas [Demas, 2005, p. 29], Gayton associates the communal space exclusively to the library. And this is not only true for academic libraries. Especially the huge reading rooms of the old public libraries in the USA offer the same experience under their vaulted ceilings. But what is this communal feeling about? It’s not an individual, spiritual experience like the sacred space, but a question of intersubjectivity. While studying their material in the quietness of the reading room, people are mirrored by the other individuals doing the same thing at the same time. Besides the knowledge, represented in the information and the individual there is a third factor, assuring the reality of the situation. So the communal space turns out to be an anthropological concept.

But obviously there are various practical problems in bringing together communal and social space beneath one roof. Social academic activities like learning groups, seminars, lectures and informal communication always come along with noise. The communal experience is associated with the special silence of reading rooms only interrupted by “hm!” and “psht!” But I agree with Gayton that it is not impossible to have both kinds of space in the same library building. It’s a question of smart architecture.

Even so most concepts of knowledge societies emphasize the importance of formal and informal communication between individuals and groups, the communal space is not necessary useless. In a social environment characterized by an information overload and the omnipresence of media and communication, a quiet but not private space for studying and reflection may be a necessity.

Societal Space

The idea of societal space is based on an idea of German-American philosopher Hannah Arendt. With good reason she was apprehensive of the alienation of the individual in mass society. At the same time she describes an artificial communitarianism in the world of products and consumption. Today these processes are counted among the great social challenges. The transformation of the public space into a societal space could be part of the answer. It becomes obvious that the societal space must not be exclusive and that politics must not be delegated into a space outside society itself. "Participation is seen not as an activity only possible in a narrowly defined political realm but as an activity that can be realized in the social and cultural spheres as well" [Benhabib, 1992, p. 86].

To fulfil this mission, the societal space has to assure access to the public and individual freedom for all members of society. Hannah Arendt herself already suggested that action is not always political action in the strict sense of the word but that it is about communication taking action together with other individuals sharing the same interests in the first place [cf. Schönherr-Mann, 2006, p. 119]. Although my theory of societal space is not fully developed yet, I would like to state the following characteristics:

- we will have to replace the strict differentiation of private and public sphere by a dynamic open concept of space.
- this space is multifunctional and is being constituted by the activities taking place in it.

- the interdependence of individual freedom and freedom of public appearance defines the societal space. Only when people have free access to these spaces, they can act as free individuals and otherwise.
- the societal space is based on rational coordination and association of interests in terms of Max Weber [Weber, 1947, p. 21]. It is not defined by common religious, nationalistic or ideological interests.

For a more extensive delineation of this concept see Eigenbrodt, 2008.

Multifunctional spaces supporting participation and free access to information in a dynamic environment seem to be the ideal solutions for the knowledge societies. But as the concept of knowledge societies itself the societal space is being based on a rather idealistic point of view. Challenges and limitations of spaces like these will have to be proofed in reality.

So many concepts...

The ideas introduced above are only a selection of the many approaches to the space of the library published or presented in the last decade. Some of them are quite similar but developed independently; some are arguments in a lively debate over the future space of the library. It is remarkable, that, depending on the background of the authors, the concepts are either developed for academic libraries or for public libraries. Very few approaches try to look at library spaces in general. I suggest that there are four good reasons for this differentiation:

- the traditional separation between the fields,
- different challenges concerning funding, patrons and mission,
- different public and political attention
- academic libraries are easier to survey because of the more homogenous user groups.

But there are similarities on all three levels of sociological interest as well. On the macro-sociological level all types of libraries are challenged by the new sociological concepts and the changing technical, cultural and economical realities. The individuals are experiencing the same transformations and have to deal with them. Therefore on a micro-sociological level all libraries are facing new needs and demands of their patrons, especially concerning technology, information resources, service and infrastructure. The most differences are within the communities themselves. But this is not only a question of communal or institutional patrons. A library in a rural area has to face different challenges than a metropolitan library and a small college library has to offer services and spaces that may be inadequate for big universities. In Germany for example the academic libraries are traditionally open for the general public as well as for most public libraries don't offer scholarly literature. Both, the

openness of the academic libraries and the more entertaining role of the public libraries are in question today. So on a meso-sociological level the differentiation is much more complicated than only distinguishing academic and public libraries.

At the same time, the design of the libraries seems to change in very similar ways, regardless of the type of library or the concept, librarians and architects prefer thinking about the library of the future. Are the debates and approaches summarized above only scholarly deliberations without any practical benefit? Or is there a connection between discourse and architecture?

... so many buildings

Talking about the library space of the future everyone has one of the iconic library buildings of the last decade in mind. May it be the Seattle Public Library, the National Library of Singapore, the Amsterdam Public Library or the Black Diamond in Copenhagen. For good reason I'm not going to analyse these buildings in the context of this paper. They are landmarks of library architecture and it's hard to compare them with your library branch around the corner or the college library of a nearby campus. A purposeful urban development, special political circumstances and a good funding helped to create those buildings which are not likely to be repeated in times of financial crisis. Instead I will speak about some details of a library design meeting the challenges of knowledge societies and give some examples from around the world.

There are different important factors in library design today:

- focus on users or patrons
- open and variable spaces instead of full flexibility
- real integration of technical infrastructure
- consideration of the urban or campus environment
- multifunctionality
- spaces for recreation and informal communication
- representation of the community or institution

Let me describe each of these factors with some examples.

Focus on users and patrons

Traditionally the main goal of a library building was to serve the needs of the library and that meant the librarians. The functionality has been measured by the length of a way between stacks and offices or catalogues and reading rooms. Barrier-free design was a question of

book trolleys instead of wheel chairs. The library has been seen as an organism which had to work in a most efficient and silent mode. One disturbing factor among others was the users or readers which came under suspect to bring disorder and negligence in the well organized system. Therefore one important factor was the separation of users, collections and staff by reading rooms, closed stacks, and high reference desks. Even after the introduction of open shelves and new reference areas first in public then in academic libraries, there have been some remnants of the 'good old times' in library design.

All of the concepts mentioned above focus their attention to the needs and demands of the user; may it be the individual seeking for a learning environment or a place for informational participation or may it be the community searching for a place to meet and to identify with.

Consequently most of the temporary library buildings set the user in the centre of attention. He can freely move between shelves, reading rooms and computer working stations and all the BackOffice areas are in between the public areas open for the users or out of the way in a special area of the building. The open, transparent offices and the stacks situated in between the public areas of the Utrecht university library in the Netherlands are a good example for a user focused design without separations.

Open and variable spaces

Flexibility is one of the main requirements to library design today. But all too often this requirement has been misunderstood. The modular and full flexible design of libraries in the 1970s and 1980s is one of the main reasons for the crisis of the library as a physical space in the 1990s besides the growing importance of digital media. The space lost his unique character, it became exchangeable and boring. Therefore most theoretical concepts are dealing with a new idea of flexibility. The library should offer variable spaces open for different kinds of use. And the user should get the opportunity to modify spaces according to his conceptions.

The *Mediothek* in Krefeld, Germany offers a huge space right in the centre of the building with stacks on wheels. Serving as a DVD and computer games library for young adults, the area can easily be transformed into a space for events and exhibitions. The library is not a full-flexible building in the sense of Faulkner-Brown, but it offers an intelligent concept of variable spaces like the reading club where light but comfortable furniture can be used to

create different situations. The open and flexible structure of the building is associated with the modernised concept of the Médiathèque.

Another example is the *Médiathèque* in Holon, Israel. It's organized like a town within the building. There are different zones in the library characterized by individual design. People can stroll around and chose the kind of environment they want to work in. At the same time this building is an example for multifunctionality because it houses a museum, an event space and a library for materials as a special information resource for architects and designers.

Real Integration of technical infrastructure

“However, students do not like a tech-heavy looking space. It appears that, just as “dream” kitchens typically feature the latest in high-tech gadgets and appliances, they also maintain the traditional woods and natural stone of old-fashioned country kitchens. This finding has implications for library remodels or new construction—students want new technologies, but presented in traditional academic surroundings.”
[Hahn and Jackson, 2008, p.10]

In the context of knowledge societies libraries have to offer both physical and digital spaces. Most concepts of learning centres and especially the idea of the web 2.0 library require an extensive technical infrastructure within the library.

The question is how to deal with these equipments. There are many bad examples for new library buildings with computer working stations destroying the design of whole areas of the library. Especially so called learning centres sometimes look like junk yards for bulky monitors and old PCs. This is not so much a question of budget – smart and new technology is not much more expensive than old one especially considering the energy costs; Old monitors for example produce a lot of heat instead of sharp pictures. Real integration of technical infrastructure means not to hide it but to make it a natural part of the design.

Inside the *Jacob-und-Wilhelm-Grimm-Zentrum* at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany all technical infrastructures have been planned together with the architect. The quality of the architecture in the computer working areas is the same as in the reading room. All tables for users offer a power-point, Wi-Fi and a special loop for Kensington locks. The cables for monitor, keyboard and mouse are inside the table and you can use a special socket for USB-Sticks and earphones.

Other libraries are showing their technical infrastructure to represent their modernity like the University of Missouri in Kansas City, United States. ÜBERPRÜFEN

The work of the fully automated stacks can be watched through a huge glass window. In this way technical equipment becomes a self evident part of the design without being hidden.

Consideration of the urban or campus environment

Especially the community-related concepts like meeting place and idea store but also societal place are based on the idea of local relationships as a starting point for worldwide networking. Obviously library buildings are always part of a broader social, institutional and architectural environment. Therefore the consideration of the surroundings is as important for a good library building as the openness for the community. For Hellen Niegaard this openness is a crucial factor for library buildings:

"Any library should be centrally located allowing equal access to the library services for all potential user groups from a geographic as well as a demographic point of view. And it should promote real interaction with the surrounding environment including easy access for disabled users." [Niegaard, 2007, p.234].

A good example for an open library in a challenging urban environment is the extension project for Stockholm city library, Sweden by German architect Heike Hanada. The so called *Delphinium* is to be build beneath a hill with an old observatory in its top. At the same time it is the extension of the famous *Asplund* library, a landmark building of modernism. Hanada managed to consider both, the hill and the heritage building in her design. With respect for Gunnar Asplunds library and his original plans for the environment she added a low entrance area to the existing building which is at the same time a kind of entrance to the hillside park.

The main city library in Vienna, Austria is located at the border between the inner city districts and a district with social and economical challenges. The building is like a bridge across the railway of the urban train system surrounded by one of the major circular roads of Vienna. Because of its actual location, the building is literally a bridge between different social groups within the capital city.

Multifunctionality

In the times of global networking it seems quite anachronistic that educational and cultural institutions serving the same community are separated in different complexes and sometimes different administrative units. On the one hand every institution needs to save its identity

and core competences, on the other hand people are searching for places where they can find different services and information resources at the same time without changing the building.

Multifunctionality in this context means the real integration of functions as represented in the concept of the Idea Stores. As stated above, the Idea Stores are not the only but the most popular examples for a multifunctional building. A concept related to the idea stores is the *ZIB* in Unna, Germany. The centre integrates city library, adult-education, city archive and cultural administration in one institution, combined with tourist information and a museum. A representative entrance and a huge lobby with café and information counter open the way to the different spaces inside the complex. Administration and budget are centralized, services are offered where they are needed.

Academic libraries can house different service facilities of a college or university as well. In Germany for example there are various concepts for the collaboration of university libraries and computer services. The *IKMZ* (Information, Communication and Media Centre) at the technical university of Cottbus for example offers all services in an integrated institution under the roof of a spectacular Herzog & De Meuron building. The *IKMZ* has one Front Office service area with both library and media services at one desk. But concepts like these turned out to have their limits because librarians can't offer technical support and computer specialists are not information specialists after all. Therefore in the mentioned *Jacob-und-Wilhelm-Grimm-Zentrum* the involved institutions decided for another service concept. Although they are working closely together in services and infrastructure, there are two service areas inside the building: One reference area for the library and one service desk for the computer and media service.

Spaces for recreation and informal communication

The social transformations and the contingency of knowledge society are not only challenging institutions like the library but the individual itself. People need safe and welcoming places they can rely on. Schroer calls them "Kontingenzbewältiger" (agents of contingency management) [Schroer, 2006, p.13]. At the same time these places can work as local knots in the global network. The concept of the low intensive meeting place and the idea of the library as a space for informational participation both highlight this function of the library.

The fireplaces and lounges of historical library buildings in the United States are prominent examples for such spaces. After World War II these areas disappeared. The technocratic vision of the library was about information retrieval and efficient study. Today we can observe the comeback of areas for recreation and informal communication not only in the mentioned theoretical concepts but also in library buildings like the national and university library in Reykjavik, Iceland where comfortable armchairs are located right between shelves and working places.

... *and fun*

Most concepts presented in this paper are about education, study, dialogue, research, networking or community building. They are all useful and necessary for the individual and the community in the knowledge society. But besides those purposeful and serious actions there is one important factor for the benefit of individuals as well as communities: Fun. Libraries should offer spaces and facilities for the relaxing and serene moments in between. And especially public libraries have to entertain people in order to force identification with the institution.

The *Korea University* in Seoul, South Korea for example offers plasma screens and armchairs to watch movies on DVD – and you can use them together with a colleague.

Conclusion

At first sight the ‘Renaissance’ of the library space seems to be a confusing variety of concepts, ideas and designs. It is nearly impossible to fulfil all the standards and requirements written in the last decade. And the users and communities are expecting technical infrastructures as well as good old library facilities, they need spaces for communal as well as for social learning and they are searching for concentrated study and recreation in the very same building. Hard work for librarians and architects trying to develop a coherent design for their project after reading all the literature and visiting all the landmark buildings.

But my paper shows that there are a lot of similarities between the theoretical concepts and the contemporary buildings. On the one hand librarians and LIS scholars are not necessary ignoring each other; on the other hand they share the same challenges. Taking into account the research about the social transformations it is not surprising, that the reactions to the development of knowledge societies are so similar. My goal was to bring both, scholarly

deliberations and best practice together in one paper and to link this overview with the context of knowledge societies. This may be helpful to initiate a discussion about the best ways for a library design considering the needs of communities and individuals as well as the challenges of social transformations. Furthermore in times of financial crisis it is important to find arguments for a debate about sufficient funding for a new building or refurbishment project.

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