

The library of

hub for knowledge, contact and culture

the future



sectorinstituut
openbare
bibliotheken

naar een sterk en
toekomstbestendig
bibliotheekbestel

The Hague, januari 2014

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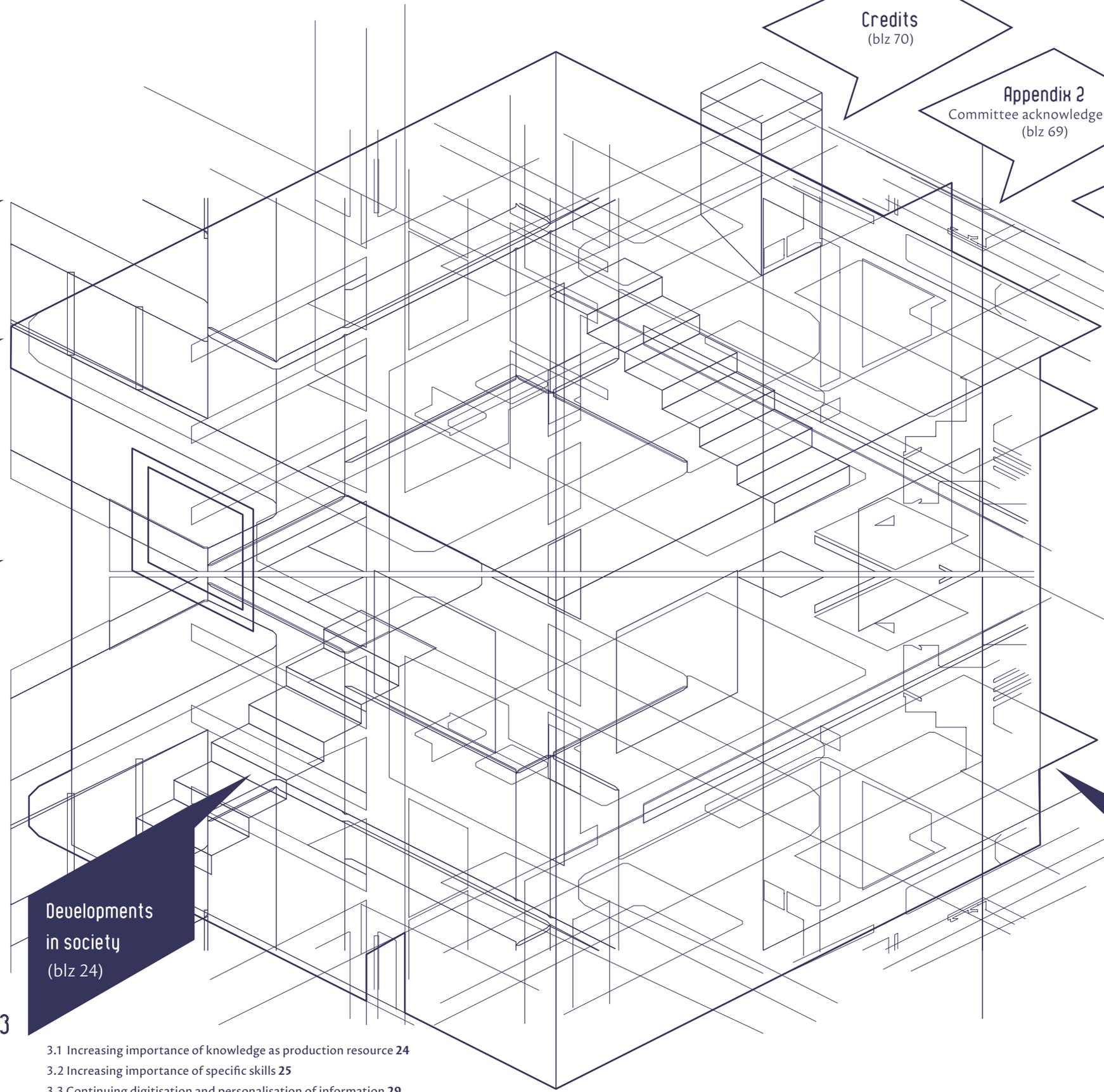
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in 2025...

The library comes to you

The Link Concept is proving highly successful in medium-sized municipalities. Links are semi-permanent, comfortable, flexible units that are placed in a school or another social or cultural organisation. The Links rotate regularly, so that there is always something else to do and see. Notice boards draw people's attention to interesting activities in the Link. Many of the materials are easy to use, such as the mobile story jukebox, or feel-good books. Remote support is always available, and a member of the library staff is on-site during busy periods. One popular activity is just to find a space and lose yourself in a story, as a form of relaxation.

Xuan, an expert in retail concepts, works as a volunteer concept manager for the libraries. As Xuan explains, 'The main aim of this concept is to increase the visibility of the library, to supplement the virtual library or fulfil a satellite capacity for a library that is further away. The physical presence helps us strengthen the brand, and by increasing our visibility people know what we have to offer, so that the brand means more to them.' The name of the concept comes from the core task of the library, which is to link people with knowledge. Companies can also hire the services of Link, for example to reduce stress levels at work. There is also a mobile version, which can be made to measure.

Xuan explains that the concept is very effective, and that visitors are very active in the Links. The result is that the library reaches more people than it did ten years ago, and is in a better position to respond to individual needs. The library is responsible for coordinating staff and resources, and many municipalities make it obligatory for people without paid work to do this kind of work in society. That works very well, and the partners are also closely involved with the local running of the Link.

Now that the concept is more or less complete, Xuan's work is finished and she can concentrate on her own future. She'll go to the library tomorrow, because she wants to start looking for another project.

Foreword

Given the drastic social and technological changes already taking place and set to accelerate in the future, is there anything useful to be said about what the public library will look like in 2025? This is a difficult question to answer. Could I have imagined, ten years ago, that I would be typing this introduction on my iPad; the same iPad on which I had just read the newspaper? Of course not, not by any stretch of the imagination. What I do know, however, is that developments are going to take place more and more quickly in the years to come.

I also know that these developments will hugely affect the core purpose of the public library. For decades, public libraries have been a fantastic depository for a huge number of wonderful books, and later records, CDs and DVDs, which they have made available to the general public, positively influencing the education and welfare of many people.

However, it would seem that this is going to change. New technology is greatly affecting the way in which books, music and other forms of information are shared. Outside the library, music is already widely available at a minimum cost, and the e-book is also increasing in popularity. Does this mean that the lending of books and music will no longer be one of the core tasks of the public library? It is possible. At the very least, we should consider it, even though we do not yet know if and when it might happen.

This means that there is every reason to discuss what the public library will look like in 2025.

At the request of the Netherlands Institute for Public Libraries (SIOB), and under my chairmanship, a committee has enthusiastically considered this, an account of which is given in this report. Enthusiastically, because we are all keen supporters of public libraries and have, now or in the past, much to thank them for. Enthusiastically too because reading is such an important part of our lives, and because the library does so much to support reading.

Whatever happens, reading will remain the cornerstone of a developed society – certainly a society in which our welfare and well-being are based on knowledge. These are the principles on which the recommendations made in this report are based, and we hope that they can be used to shape public libraries of the future.

These libraries will not all be the same – that much is certain. Even now, we see beautiful new buildings arising in the cities, with a broad appeal.

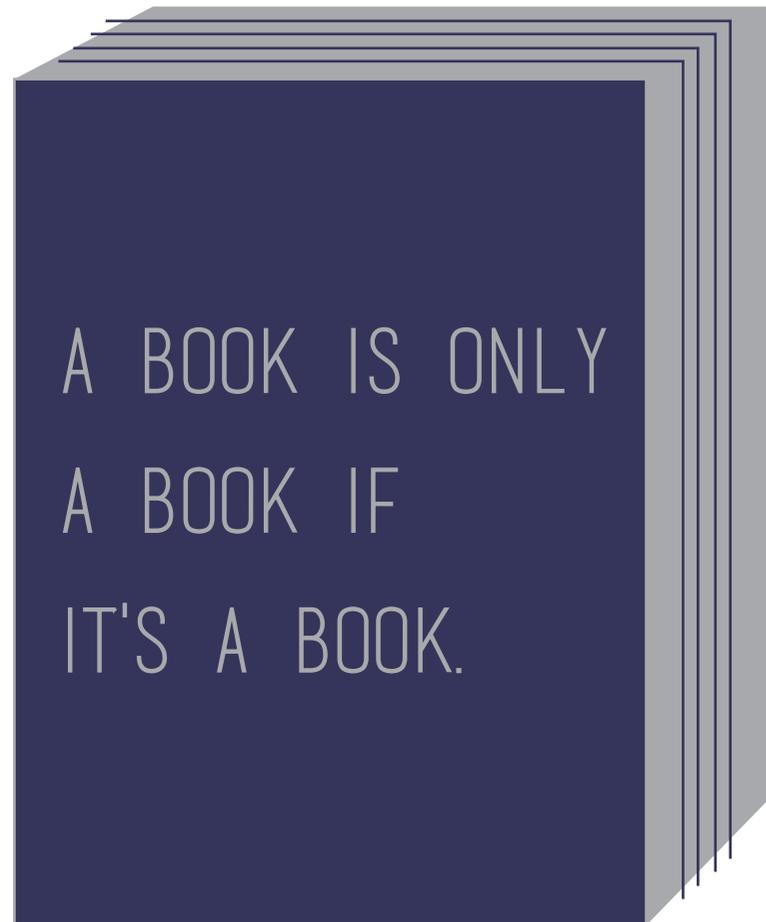
We also see local city libraries that form a central base for many different knowledge-based and cultural activities, and also provide space for social activities, simply because the library is there.

We see the same function in smaller communities, where the library provides the perfect meeting place for people who have had enough of working alone behind their computers or on their smartphones. They can meet other people, and by doing so encounter ideas that they may not have considered otherwise. As well as being a centre for knowledge and culture, therefore, the library of the future will increasingly take on this kind of social role.

Drastic cutbacks are being made in libraries in some areas of the Netherlands. It is our hope that enough libraries will remain to be able to deliver the functions described in our report. After all, these functions are essential if we are serious about the knowledge-based society, our welfare and our well-being. We therefore believe that our public libraries will remain, whatever shape or form they may take.

Job Cohen, chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Amsterdam Public Library and former Mayor of Amsterdam

Summary



Forced by the digitisation of society, rapid social and economic change and the scaling back of the government sector, the library needs to reinvent itself. What, therefore, will be the purpose of the public library in 2025, and how will it be put into practice?



Developments in society

Society is changing, and knowledge and information are becoming increasingly essential production resources. If people are to take part in and contribute to the knowledge and information society, they need to be able to continually acquire knowledge and information, interpret it correctly and exchange it with other people. As the development of any skill is based on language skills, these are therefore essential for accessing and understanding any area of knowledge.

Even so, despite the increasing importance of reading, developments seem to point to a fragmentation of the reading culture. Although the growth in digital media means that more is read on-screen, people spend less time reading books, and Dutch school children have, compared with children in other countries, a more negative attitude to reading. The closure of book shops, the transfer of sales channels to the digital domain and the shift from the printed word to digital also means that the visible elements and places that promote reading are disappearing from our physical surroundings.

Continuing digitisation and the growing amount of information to be found on the Internet means that ICT literacy has become a basic skill. ICT literacy consists not just of basic computing skills, but also skills such as finding, assessing, interpreting and using information sources. Furthermore, the increased personalisation of content using algorithms means that users need to be aware that the information they see is a result of their online search behaviour, and that there is other information that they do not see.

Not everyone is equally capable of acquiring these ICT skills and, although they have grown up in a digital society, young people are apparently less skilled in the use of the Internet than was previously thought. Even though the gap between those who do and those who do not have access to ICT has closed considerably, a new divide is opening up between those with sufficient ICT skills and those without. Because of that, there will still be groups that get left behind in the future, either due to lack of access to the latest technologies, or due to a lack of the required skills.

The rapid changes taking place in society mean that people need to develop the necessary knowledge and skills and continue to do so throughout their lifetimes: lifelong learning. In addition to language, information and ICT literacy skills, there will also be an increasing focus on '21st century skills'. These are teamwork, creativity, communication and problem-solving skills and critical thinking – all essential in the 21st century economy.

Various developments can change the way in which these skills are acquired and in which knowledge is developed. Information dissemination is increasingly a two-way process, in which the distinction between author, reader and publisher (consumer and producer) is becoming more and more blurred. In addition, learning more often takes place outside the formal structures and within a social process. Aided and stimulated by modern communication technologies, people are informally organising themselves in horizontal – sometimes global – structures around particular themes and interests. Community connections, knowledge sharing and synergy are becoming increasingly important, and the intelligence of the community is increasingly being drawn on to answer questions, generate creativity and innovate.

Despite the growing connectivity in the digital domain, some are concerned about increasingly weaker connections in the physical domain. Physical social contact not only stimulates mutual trust, recognition and solidarity, but can also help prevent loneliness and develop mutual understanding. The closure of community centres means that there are fewer public organisations able to contribute to social cohesion within local communities, which affects the vitality of these communities.

This applies in particular to smaller rural communities, in which facilities are increasingly under pressure due to the exodus to the towns.

Leisure time is also increasingly under pressure. People have a growing need for convenience, speed and flexibility to be able to effectively organise and combine their working and private lives. Digital media can help, but can also contribute to feelings of stress and pressure due to the continuous demand for connectivity and accessibility. This therefore also creates a need to get away from it all from time to time. As far as recreational activities are concerned, a shift can be discerned from an emphasis on observation to experience.

The future purpose of public libraries

The core purpose of libraries will be to contribute to and form a foundation for the knowledge and information society. This means stimulating, supporting, facilitating and equipping people with what they need to be able to participate in and contribute to the modern knowledge society.

The core task of the library begins with literacy in the broadest sense. Reading is the cornerstone of knowledge acquisition, and stimulates imagination and creativity. Supporting reading skills and promoting a reading and literary culture therefore need to remain at the heart of the service provided by public libraries, certainly now that the reading culture is under such threat.

ICT literacy, and in particular correct information interpretation and usage, is also a basic skill for participation in society and for the acquisition and exchange of knowledge. Libraries are experts in finding, connecting and transferring information and will continue to play an important advisory role in this in the future. The library will surprise and inspire, and challenge people to embrace enrichment and reflection in a world of personalisation and filtered information.

The library will also need to focus on other important skills that are required of people in the 21st century. By putting in place a stimulating learning environment, the library will provide a platform for people to meet and to share knowledge, so that they can acquire these specific skills. The library will focus therefore not just on eliminating disadvantage but also on developing talent.

In an increasingly individualised society, the library provides a meeting place. After all, knowledge cannot be developed without some form of socio-cultural meeting place. Libraries add vital value to all the opportunities provided by digital resources: an attractive, stimulating environment to learn and to read, to be amongst other people or to escape from the constant pressure of connection. The library of the future will therefore be a modern agora – a modern socio-cultural marketplace – a central, dynamic meeting place where people can relax and meet other people, and where they are encouraged to take an active part in society.

Defining the purpose: from collection to connection

The way in which the library achieves its purpose will change in the coming years. The easier it becomes to find information elsewhere, the less need there is for libraries to provide access to their own collections. In a modern network society, reading and learning will be increasingly influenced by, or even part of, social processes. Rapidly-developing information and communication technologies will also make it easier to ask questions of and share information with other members of the community. The library of the future will therefore need to focus more on creating, stimulating and facilitating useful connections.

More than ever before, people can learn and study by themselves and at home, as they can find everything they need on the World Wide Web. The library will supplement this, and become a social learning platform where people – supported and stimulated by the resources available – can work and study together. Visitors to the library will come to learn and share knowledge.

Libraries operate in the local social context. Their success depends on the connections they are able to make with and between people and the local community, local government, the local business community and local public organisations. Their firmly-anchored, physical presence in society, their accessibility and their trustworthiness makes them an attractive partner for other organisations. They can therefore facilitate access to a wide variety of activities and take on a role of local guide and agent.

The road ahead

The developments in information technology and the social and economic changes taking place mean that libraries are going to have to change both the way they are run and the services they provide. They also need to make it clearer to people what the outcomes and benefits of their social purpose and corresponding tasks are.

The logical question is what the relationship between the physical and the digital library will look like. Of course, it is clear that libraries will need to transfer a large part of their operations to the digital domain, as digitisation is in full swing.

The two domains should supplement, rather than be independent of, one another: the digital library will complement the physical, and vice versa. Both will strengthen and enrich one another, and in each domain people will be invited to make use of the other. This kind of integrated approach will enable libraries to offer visitors a richer experience.

A successful transformation to an innovative library based on connections implies a proactive attitude on the part of the library. Successful socio-cultural entrepreneurs are alert, creative, bold and convincing, combine substance with marketing acumen and look for support for their organisation and services, also financially. They constantly weigh up the balance between demand and supply-focused products, they network, enter into social alliances and create a learning library network in which successes are shared and adopted if they are found to fit the local environment and situation.

Conclusion

Since its origins in the early 20th century, the library has focused on the development of both the individual and society as a whole. The founding principles of the public library will remain unchanged in 2025: the library will still contribute to the development of the individual, and therefore remain a vital link in the future knowledge society. Apart from schools, the library will be the only institute to guarantee open access to information and sources for the development of the individual.

The library in 2025 will, like that of now and a century earlier, provide access to information and knowledge. Whereas printed matter has been the main carrier of such information and knowledge for many decades, we will see a multiplicity of knowledge and information forms in the future – in databanks and electronic books, as well as on paper and in people's heads.

The library will form a hub in which much of this knowledge comes together, is actively shared and further developed. The library will be a present-day agora – a modern socio-cultural marketplace – the beating heart of the community. It will distinguish itself from other meeting places by its easily-accessible, non-commercial character. Its physical location will give it socio-cultural value in cities, towns and villages, and ensure that it makes a real contribution to a sense of community and cohesion.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

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The chapters in this report follow the order of the questions we asked ourselves. The main question is:

how will the social function of the library change towards 2025?

To answer this question, we asked ourselves the following questions:

1 Where are we coming from?

a What is the social function of the library now?

b What makes the library different from other institutes?

2 Where are we going and what does this mean for the library's purpose?

a What changes and shifts are taking place in society?

b What, as a result of these changes, will be the core purpose and activities of public libraries in 2025?

c What will change in the interpretation of this purpose?

d What does this imply for the core functions as we now know them?

3 What is needed to achieve this?

Introduction

The objective of the public library has always been to provide access to books – as a source of knowledge, information and culture – to support and further the development of the general public. This basic objective may have evolved over the years, but the essence has never changed, neither has it ever really been called into question. However, the world is changing rapidly, and developments in information technology in particular affect the library sector directly.

Future vision

With the imminent implementation of the new Dutch Libraries Act 2015, the need grew for a future vision, both in the library sector and the Dutch Council for Culture – the legal adviser to the Dutch government. A vision was required that could provide direction for choices that needed to be made for the future.

The Netherlands Institute for Public Libraries (SIOB) asked us, as an external committee, to outline a vision for the social purpose of public libraries in 2025. How will the libraries interpret this purpose, and what will it mean for individuals and society as a whole? We soon realised that a single vision, or reality, is insufficient. Even if trends are identified, it is still difficult to predict the direction and speed of developments. In addition, there is much diversity within the library sector, with clear differences between city and rural libraries, the focus of different municipalities, and the social issues and cultural infrastructure in different regions.

This report presents an outlook for 2025. We have chosen a timeframe of more than ten years because this is longer than the usual policy period, while 2025 is close enough to be able to extrapolate trends to some extent.

In this report, we summarise what has been written and said about the purpose and functions of the public library over the years. We also address relevant trends and indicate what the main purpose of the library in 2025 should be, and which tasks and activities will help achieve this. This report therefore provides a vision of the future and a tool for discussion about the future functions of the public library.

The trend descriptions are used to substantiate expected developments in society; future illustrations provide an idea of what the effects of these developments could be in 2025. The future illustrations together indicate the breadth of and the opportunities provided by the social function of the public library. We also highlight some particular ideas in the literature, for example using quotes.



Where we are coming from: social purpose and public values

We cannot look to the future without also reviewing the present and the past. After all, the direction that libraries are to take depends to a large extent on the situation they find themselves in now. This section focuses on the original principles of the public library. What was its social purpose, and which specific values distinguish it from other institutes – private or public?

2.1 Social purpose

The first public, subsidised libraries were established in the Netherlands in about 1900, with the aim to improve the quality of the collections in people's and city libraries. The social objective was the betterment or education of the general public, to enable self-development. The library was an institute that was interested in the education of all social layers, and did not operate alone but supported other educational institutions. The main focus was on the lower classes in society and on helping them achieve more.

The original objective of the public library has remained the same over the years, despite minor changes in response to developments in society. For example, the compartmentalisation of Dutch society¹ along socio-political lines audience in the 1920s also had repercussions for the library.

Due to this compartmentalisation, people's betterment and education mainly took place within a particular socio-political group. When, in 1948, freedom of information for the residents of all member countries of the United Nations was set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the focus shifted to achieving this. The emphasis at the time was on improving opportunities for individuals; in the 1970s and 1980s the emphasis was on the link with welfare work; and in recent decades the focus has moved towards the use and benefit of knowledge and information. At the same time, the government is now stepping back and more is expected of the general public. Libraries have responded to this, contributing to the self-sufficiency and participation of the general public.²

The core functions of public libraries

For many years, the prevailing image of the library has been that of a place to borrow books. To show that a library does much more than this, five core functions were defined by the Dutch government during the bibliotheekvernieuwing (library innovation) process that took place in 2005. These core functions are defined in the Library Guidelines (Richtlijn voor bibliotheken), drawn up by the Dutch Association of Public Libraries (VOB) and the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG).³ These core functions are described as follows:



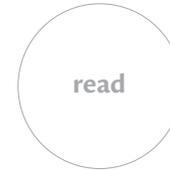
The library as a warehouse of knowledge and information

1 Through its collection, the library makes it possible to borrow or consult information and acts as an intermediary (personal and digital) between information providers and information seekers. Information could include that produced by or about the government, or information on children, parenting and healthcare, for example.



The library as a centre for development and education

2 The library puts together project collections relating to a specific theme (fiction and non-fiction books, songs, poems and audio-visual materials), provides study opportunities and facilities for school pupils, students and anyone else interested in learning, and provides educational support, primarily through the multimedia centre, but also by offering information skill lessons. The library also stimulates target groups other than school pupils and students to acquire information skills.



The library as a source of inspiration for reading and literature

3 The library provides a progressive reading list and corresponding collection for children aged 0 to 18. The adult collection reflects the reading behaviour of the local population (differentiated by target group and needs) and provides simple access to the entire Dutch public library collection. Less popular books that are nevertheless part of the literary canon are also included in the collection. Standard activities include literary readings and recitals, to encourage reading.



The library as a podium for meeting and debate

5 The library is a neutral, objective, impartial meeting place that welcomes all groups in society. It provides space for local initiatives, debates on social themes, public education activities and the discussion of themes of local, regional, national or global importance.



The library as an encyclopaedia of art and culture

4 The library presents intellectual and artistic activities and related materials. Collections of historical or other interest are also housed and made available. The library makes reference to local and provincial cultural traditions. It works together with other cultural institutes to provide background information on museum exhibitions, concerts and theatre performances. The library creates links with professional and amateur art through lectures and collections specifically referring to art, as well as specific services, such as programming information and ticket sales.

The Library Guidelines also state that the omission of any one of these core functions will affect the other functions: it is their interconnectedness that forms the heart of the complete public library. However, the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science stated in 2008 that the core functions have resulted in a ‘highly varied and diffuse body of activities and services’ that could compromise the recognisable mission of public libraries as a public institution. The Minister also said in 2008 that – of the five core functions named – he considered those relating to informing, learning and reading to be the most important, because of their relevance to the future of the sector and because of the real threats that exist in these areas.⁴ The ‘art and culture’ and ‘meeting and debate’ functions were abandoned as a result, although the Council for Culture noted that they could be important in improving the perception of public libraries at the local level. Nevertheless, the Council agreed with the Minister that these core functions do not require government support at the national level, although possibly at the provincial level. All five functions are addressed in local and provincial policy in the 2010–2012 Library Charter, which describes the responsibilities – financial and otherwise – of the three layers of government, whilst national government provides support for the three functions reading, learning and informing.⁵

In the new Public Library Services Bill (Wsob), or Library Bill for short,⁶ the Dutch government gives municipalities the freedom to maintain a physical library as they choose. The Explanatory Memorandum to the Bill states that there is agreement in the library sector with regard to the five core functions. The Bill allows physical libraries the freedom to develop depending on local needs and opportunities. It refers to the five core functions because applying just the three functions reading, learning and informing would overly limit the libraries. The five functions may be expressed in both physical and digital form; it is up to the libraries how they do this.

The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) states in its most recent guideline for public libraries that the library purpose should focus on education and self-development.⁷ Betterment and development, therefore, still form the foundation of the library. The core functions enable the public library to achieve this.

“THE NEED FOR AN AGENCY AVAILABLE TO ALL, WHICH PROVIDES ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE IN PRINTED AND OTHER FORMATS SUCH AS MULTI-MEDIA AND INTERNET SOURCES, TO SUPPORT FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION, HAS BEEN THE REASON FOR THE FOUNDATION AND MAINTENANCE OF MOST PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND REMAINS A CORE PURPOSE FOR THE PUBLIC LIBRARY.”⁸

2.2 Public values

Various policy documents, recommendations and guidelines assign a number of unique public values to public libraries, based on which the library is to be run.⁹ These values justify and provide a means of assessment of the public tasks that the library is entrusted with – physical and digital. The values named are not always the same, but usually include the following four¹⁰:

Accessibility

Every member of the public can and may make use of the services provided by the library.¹² In addition to equal physical access for all, each visitor has equal access to the library’s communication channels and equal educational development opportunities. Each visitor has access to information and culture and, in so far as that access can enable social integration, the barriers to access (financial or otherwise) are to be as low as possible. Specific services and materials are also provided for users unable to make use of the regular services and materials.

Multiformity

Libraries provide services that are suitable for all members of the community, without discrimination, taking into account the variety of cultures, languages and opinions in that community. Information is available in all relevant languages and the materials and services reflect all groups and needs. The library personnel are also representative of the local population and able to work with culturally diverse groups. Furthermore, the library encourages groups to come into contact with the ideas and opinions of other groups.¹³

Independence

The library is neutral and non-commercial and operates independently of the direct interests of government or the business community. The collection is put together independently of political and economic interests and collections and services are not influenced by ideology, political or religious censor or commercial motives.¹⁴

Trustworthiness

The library is a trusted institution and has the task to support the general public in its assessment of information. The rapid increase in the volume of information makes it important for people to know which information they can rely on. This is therefore one of the core tasks of the public library.¹⁵

in 2025...

The mega-library as melting pot

The mega-library in the city attracts visitors with many different backgrounds. For older people, the library has a social function. When site manager Mr Boudewijn walked around earlier he heard people at the big table in discussion with one another. One man was saying that he had been looking for local historical information about the city, to which he had been able to add his own ideas and thoughts. His enthusiasm was catching – people went with him to see what he had done; maybe they had something to add as well.

The library system encourages ‘accidental meetings’. People near the building are enticed in, and once inside they are invited to take part in one of the activities or to enter a particular room. Through their library profile, people can be linked to other people with similar interests. They can also work or read alone in quiet booths. People may also decide to organise something themselves, such as the stories relay race this morning.

Expert teams also regularly visit the library. They carry out experiments together with visitors in the design labs and develop and test the latest reading technologies. Some people who have only lived in the Netherlands for a short while come regularly to the library to learn Dutch, using the latest methods. Students can also take part in the experiments to gain practical experience in how these sessions are run.

Most of the spaces in the library are open and light. Students are sitting in one of the creative corners for a brainstorm session. They had been looking for someone to help them with a good research question and research objective, and it looks like they have found the right person.

It is very busy in the library; it feels like organised chaos really. There was a time when there were problems with young people’s behaviour, but since the introduction of attractive activities for them too, such as the DeepThinking Lab, the multi-sense story machines and the simulations and serious games in the inflatable game tubes, there have been a lot less problems. Rewarding positive behaviour also helps, such as active participation, doing something to help or having a really good idea – which has a positive effect on the personal reputation score. There is a points system with which young people can ‘buy’ privileges, such as reserving a popular place with friends or a high-quality connection for a holographic film.

3

Developments in society

Society is changing. However, it is difficult to predict how and with what speed these changes will take place. What we do know is which trends are taking shape.

These trends form the backdrop against which the library develops and implements its function (see Section 2).¹⁶

3.1 Increasing importance of knowledge as production resource

The Netherlands aim to become one of the top knowledge economies in the world. In addition, the objectives set out in the Lisbon Strategy in 2000 and the subsequent Europe 2020 strategy in 2010 aim to ensure that the European economy becomes a highly competitive knowledge economy. As a result, lifelong learning has been placed high on the agenda in the Netherlands, as it is in the European Union and international organisations such as UNESCO and the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development). The focus is not just on reducing disadvantages, but also on developing talent and excellence. If they are to take part in the modern knowledge economy, people need to have received sufficient primary and secondary schooling, and they need to continue to develop competencies (knowledge and skills) throughout their lives.

As innovation processes become faster and as technological developments follow one another more and more quickly, so the importance of human capital and investment in human capital increases. Internationalisation, technological revolutions, diversity, the rapid ‘ageing’ of knowledge and the need to process large volumes of knowledge mean that people need a broad education. This is why the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) argues in its report ‘Towards a learning economy’ that we must focus on knowledge absorption if we are to increase the earning capacity of the Netherlands. The importance of knowledge circulation is also emphasised: this refers not just to the production of new knowledge but also to the better use of existing knowledge. More and more knowledge is being made available more quickly, but it does not always reach those who would benefit from it. Society therefore needs to move from a traditional knowledge economy to a learning economy.¹⁷

More than ever before, lifelong learning will be crucially important in the future. The distinction between a learning phase and a working phase in which people apply what they have learnt is becoming less clear. There will also be a greater focus on learning outside the formal educational structure.

This lifelong learning provides people with the best opportunities for optimum personal development and allows them to constantly renew knowledge and competences. Digitisation also provides more opportunities, with better access to education, regardless of time and location.¹⁸

3.2 Increasing importance of specific skills

In a modern knowledge-intensive society, it is important that people are able to continue to develop and maintain the skills that enable them to be an effective member of society.

3.2.1 Literacy as starting point

Literacy is one of the most basic conditions for sustainable employment and self-sufficiency and for preventing social exclusion. The exact meaning of the term ‘literacy’ is subject to various interpretations. The OECD defines literacy as ‘the ability to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts to participate in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential. Literacy encompasses a range of skills from the decoding of written words and sentences to the comprehension, interpretation, and evaluation of complex texts.’¹⁹

The use and understanding of language and texts also form the basis of other definitions.

Because the requirements for full participation in society continue to increase and involve a wider range of skills, the Dutch government decided in 2011 that it needed to broaden the definition of the term literacy. The focus on reading and writing in the literacy action plan was extended to listening, speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and the relevant use of everyday technology to communicate and use information.²⁰ As well as the language component, therefore, literacy was also given an ICT/information component.

Reading really is the key to everything. In the present knowledge society, 80% of work is related to reading and writing, and good language and reading skills are essential in any career.²¹ Good reading skills are therefore crucial – for all ages – for full social and cultural participation, and therefore for a competitive knowledge economy. People who can read well find work more easily, earn more, are healthier and more socially and politically active. Furthermore, these personal benefits also lead to economic growth.²² Inequality in literacy can result in greater social differences and higher societal costs. Low literacy levels mean lower productivity and a lower income from taxes, and increases the pressure on facilities and subsidies. According to an estimate made by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) in 2013, this costs the Netherlands an average of € 560 million a year.²³

Recent international research conducted by the OECD shows that the Netherlands has the third highest literacy level in the world.²⁴ However, there is still room for improvement as the percentage of people with low literacy skills has increased from 9.4% to 11.9% over the last 17 years. Currently, 1.3 million people in the Netherlands are considered 'low-literate', of which two thirds are non-immigrants. The low literacy group consists mainly of low-skilled adults (women, the unemployed and older people) and people new to the Netherlands. If there is no change in policy, the expectation is that the average literacy level will decrease further up to 2020.²⁵

Developing literacy skills starts at a young age, and reading is essential. National and international research shows a demonstrable relationship between reading and language development. Children who are read to or read themselves every day develop a wider vocabulary and a higher language level than children who do not.²⁶ Reading also helps improve both writing and grammar skills.²⁷ It has been shown that regularly reading fiction positively influences language skills, throughout childhood.²⁸

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Language skills also form the basis for the development of higher order skills, such as analytical and problem-solving capabilities, and are essential to gain access to and understand specific areas of knowledge.

Language skills also form the basis for the development of higher order skills, such as analytical and problem-solving capabilities, and are essential to gain access to and understand specific areas of knowledge.²⁹ Research shows that language skills have a positive effect on the pre-secondary school CITO test score – both the final score and the different sections such as language, arithmetics, study skills and world orientation.³⁰ Early reading skills are therefore important, and we need to make sure that this remains a point of focus, especially as international research shows that Dutch primary and secondary school children have a more negative attitude to reading than children in other countries, and spend little time doing it.³¹

Fragmentation of the reading culture

Both research and experience show that reading is good for the individual and for society. Even so, its popularity – certainly as far as the printed form is concerned – is in decline.

The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) Time Use Study shows that the amount of time spent by people aged 13 and over on reading printed matter (newspapers, magazines and books) decreased from 6.1 to 3.8 hours a week between 1975 and 2006³², and further to 2.6 hours a week between 2006 and 2011.³³ A similar negative trend is seen in book sales: 51 million paper books were sold in 2008, compared with just 44 million in 2012.³⁴ The continued existence of bookshops is already clearly threatened by the decrease in turnover due to digital competition.

There are also more and more reports of bookshops or even chains of bookshops closing or coming into difficulties because of the growth in online sales of physical books. As far as libraries are concerned, this also means a loss of physical locations that promote reading.

Even though more people are reading and buying e-books, the decline in the reading and sale of printed media has not yet been compensated by digital books. This is not to say that people are actually reading less, as the increase in digital media means that more is being read on-screen, possibly also in work, school and study time. Many digital media activities which, according to the Time Use Study, people now spend more time doing, involve reading and/or writing, such as the use of word processing programmes, e-mailing and looking up information. These are also language-related activities.

The increase in digital reading on e-readers, tablets and laptops means that changes are also taking place in the reading process and the reading experience, which some see as having a negative effect on the quality of reading. This is because when we read digitally we tend to scan rather than read line by line. Digital reading also encourages multitasking: switching to other functionalities on the same device whilst reading, which results in repeated interruptions to the reading and interpretation process.

There is therefore 'ground for claims that digitally we read more quickly and fragmented and that this has negative effects on our concentration and immersion in the text.'³⁵

At the same time, digital reading and the technological developments it represents offers opportunities for effective supplementary communication forms such as images, form and touch. Information is provided in different ways, so that text is no longer always the most dominant of these. After all, visualisation helps people understand and form a mental image of complex situations.³⁶ The big data trend means that more and more visual applications are being used to improve the processing and presentation of information.³⁷ This trend also affects the form that books take: it is possible that the books of the future will be made of multimedia fragments of text, music, the spoken word and film.

3.2.2 ICT and information skills

In addition to text and language skills, the information and ICT aspects of literacy are also becoming increasingly important. An increasing number of companies and government agencies are starting to focus on digital and information skills rather than physical skills,³⁸ and the enormous growth in the amount of digital information produced worldwide makes it more important to be able to deal with such information. Acquiring these skills involves more than just learning basic computing skills; more specific skills such as searching, selecting and evaluating information, as well as strategic skills relating to the use of digital media for personal and social development, are also very important.³⁹

Despite the increase in the importance of information skills, different studies show that many people do not yet have the skills required. Older people often lack medium-related, or basic computing skills, and children and teenagers often lack the more information-specific skills.⁴⁰ Even though they are growing up in a digital age, young people are less skilled in their use of the Internet than is often thought. Research shows that this group – although it would not think so itself – often has difficulty in defining a problem and processing information. There is a lack of patience, little reflection, an inability to use different search strategies and a tendency to click on everything they see and to follow just one search path.⁴¹

With regards to the extent to which people are able to maintain the required information skills, it is possible that a new digital divide has formed: an almost unbridgeable gap in the ability to work with computers and the Internet, between and within different user groups. This gap used to be determined by access to Internet, related to the socio-economic status (SES) of families, in the sense that families with a low SES were generally less likely to have a home Internet connection.⁴² However, almost all Dutch households now have a computer with Internet access and more and more people have access to the web using mobile devices.⁴³ The new digital divide is most likely to be related to education level, and to differences in strategic and tactical skills rather than differences in access. The Internet provides fantastic economic and social opportunities, and it is mainly highly-educated people who are able to benefit most from this to achieve their objectives and make the most of their opportunities, for example in their own careers. Less highly-educated people are generally less able to use the Internet in this way, and therefore less capable of improving their position.⁴⁴ Even in the future, there will still be some groups that are disadvantaged. People who are computer illiterate, have special needs or low literacy skills will find it difficult to make use of digital services. Extra help must be made available for people who are unable to make use of services independently, either digitally or analogue.⁴⁵

Improving media and information skills is a high priority for the EU. Enhancing digital literacy, skills and inclusion is one of the seven pillars of the Digital Agenda, the European strategy to use digital technologies to deliver sustainable economic growth in Europe.⁴⁶

3.2.3 Other 21st century skills

In addition to language, information and ICT literacy skills, the modern knowledge economy also requires other specific competencies. The demand for ‘knowledge workers’ and ‘people workers’ will increase, while the demand for routine jobs, such as production work, will decrease. If they are to be well prepared for such a labour market, it is important that young people have the right competences for the jobs of the future.⁴⁷ These jobs are expected to require a number of core competences: the 21st century skills. Kennisnet has applied various 21st century skills models to the Dutch situation. As well as literacy in its broadest sense, Kennisnet names competences such as teamwork, creativity, communication and problem-solving skills, critical thinking and socio-cultural skills. An engaged, pro-active attitude is also regarded as essential in the 21st century.⁴⁸

3.3 Continuing digitisation and personalisation of information

More digital and open access information

Content is becoming increasingly digital and therefore easier to find. Almost everyone in the Netherlands has access to the Internet – in recent years increasingly by using mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. New technologies make it easier to collect, create and share knowledge. Users can easily add information to previously-published information and can even produce their own information. As a result, information is more likely to be open access and the distinction between author, reader and publisher is becoming increasingly blurred. This, together with the increase in capacity and possibilities for long-term storage, has resulted in explosive growth in the annual production of digital content. Furthermore, intelligent support and advanced search engines make the information easier to search and use. The result is a large amount of information that can be quickly and easily consulted at any time and anywhere.

However, even in the current information society, there is still information that is not always available, for example books that are not yet published in digital form.

This applies for example to 20th century archives and texts that are slowly being digitised. In addition, not all information on the Internet is available free of charge. A lot of information is stored in databases and only available to people licensed to access and use it, either through their employer, school, library or otherwise.

Digital information monopolists such as Apple and Amazon are also increasingly looking to integrate technology and content so that certain content can only be consulted on specific devices, hindering the exchange of information.

Changes in the book trade

Digitisation is also changing the book trade. Since 2008, the purchase of printed books has dropped year after year, while there has been an increase in e-book sales. Digital books are also increasingly purchased through non-traditional channels and the rise in the amount of copyright-free DRM (Digital Rights Management) books and illegal downloads is putting a lot of pressure on traditional publishers.

It is unclear if, and when, digital books will replace physical ones. The market share of e-books is as yet limited. Although sales increased in 2012 compared with 2011, they still totalled just 2.7% of total book sales (1.5% in 2011).⁴⁹ In addition, recent American research shows that the growth in the market share of e-books in America, the worldwide market leader, is currently levelling off at about 30%.⁵⁰ It is difficult to predict the speed with which e-books will be taken up in the Netherlands and physical books replaced with digital. The most likely scenario is that they will continue to exist alongside one another for some time.⁵¹

The pre-sales function is also changing. Book advice and background information, often placed by the readers themselves, has largely moved onto the Internet in recent years. Reviews, background information and interviews are published on digital news sites and special websites, and book websites and social media are an increasingly important source of inspiration and information.

Personalisation

Content is becoming increasingly personalised. Using metadata management and user interface personalisation, information is becoming demand-oriented and intuitive. Consumers generate huge volumes of data, and cheaper and better ways of analysing data help companies improve their predictions of consumer behaviour and needs. This makes it possible to offer more personalised services that match consumer requirements and interests. However, some believe that this high level of personalisation also has a downside, as people enter unique information worlds that are so tailored to them that they are no longer exposed to anything uncomfortable, challenging, different or new. Eli Pariser calls this 'filter bubbles'.⁵²

3.4 Increasing importance of networking and the community

Supported and stimulated by modern communication technology, people are increasingly organising themselves in informal, horizontal, and sometimes global, structures around certain themes and interests. The result is new production and power relationships, in which the general public can influence policy through interest groups and other associations. Where society was previously structured around institutes, a shift can now be seen towards structures centred on the individual and the community outside these institutes – a shift that is sometimes referred to as 'democracy from below'.⁵³

In this new society, in which influence comes more from the community itself and is organised bottom up, personal connections, knowledge sharing and partnerships take on an increasingly important role. Sharing and cooperation is of course nothing new, but opportunities for renting, borrowing, exchanging and sharing products have increased as a result of technological developments. This phenomenon is also called 'collaborative consumption': obtaining ownership of and access to goods that you do not have through social networks.

As far as knowledge and information are concerned, this exchange is increasingly taking place online. A network or community is more useful than the opinion of a single expert and is increasingly used to find answers.

James Surowiecki speaks of the wisdom of crowds, and in his book of the same name he explores how large groups of people are more intelligent than a few clever individuals.⁵⁴ The idea is that because there is much more information and knowledge in a group, decisions can be better taken by a group than by a single member of that group.⁵⁵

The ideas of Charles Leadbeater are in keeping with the increasing interest in the intelligence of communities. In his book *We Think*, he shows how the Internet functions as a platform that provides a voice for more and more people, and where the number of conversations and the exchange of ideas has enormous potential for mass creativity and innovation.⁵⁶ An example of the working of this community intelligence is Wikipedia. Of course, the power of the cooperative intelligence ensures that the wheat is separated from the chaff, as well as the knowledge of one person becoming group property.

Social learning

Learning is increasingly a co-creative social process that takes place through partnerships and sharing. 'Fab labs' and 'makerspaces'⁵⁷ are typical examples of social learning. These are informal learning environments in which equipment is made available to realise individual projects or to enable children to become acquainted with modern technology through play. People work on projects together and the knowledge learnt is shared on online platforms.

Fab labs and makerspaces make it possible for teamwork, creativity, technology and practical and cognitive skills to come together, and knowledge is transferred not formally, but by making something together. President Barack Obama sees the 'maker movement' as one of the greatest opportunities for the American economy; some even talk of a new industrial revolution.⁵⁸

Social reading

One example of how social processes will play a larger role in the use of information is 'social reading', or 'networked reading'. In the physical domain, reading as a social activity in reading clubs or reading circles has long been popular.⁵⁹ However, there are more and more opportunities in the digital domain as people can do the same things with digital books as they do with physical books. For example, they can borrow books, place personal comments and annotations in texts and share comments with other readers through a network. More and more digital resources are being developed to make this possible, so that not only the text of a book, but increasingly comments, annotations, supplementary articles and reviews are also made accessible.⁶⁰ One example is the Amazon Kindle platform, which shows which parts of a text have been underlined the most. The Readmill app⁶¹ also gives e-book readers the chance to 'talk' to each another and authors. Authors can communicate with their readers through the text margins, participate in conversations relating to the text and therefore maintain contact with readers who have enjoyed their book.

3.5 Consumers have less time and expect more

There are real changes taking place in consumer needs, behaviour and opinion, partly as a result of the trends outlined above. For example, various time use studies show that a large proportion of the population feels that it does not have enough time.⁶² People therefore have a greater need for convenience, speed and flexibility to be able to organise and combine their working and private lives more efficiently.

Digital media can help, but on the other hand can also be the cause of feelings of stress and pressure. People are becoming increasingly skillful in the use of their electronic devices and more tied to, and even dependent, on them. People are now online on different devices, several times a day and at different locations, so much so that research agency Forrester talks of the 'ultra-connected customer' or the 'always addressable customer'.⁶³ However, this continuous demand for connectivity and accessibility would seem to also be creating a trend to escape from it all from time to time.

Changes are also taking place in what people do with their time. There is a move towards intensity – people want to be immersed in a particular experience. A shift can be seen in the cultural sector from observation and critical reflection to immersion and kicks.⁶⁴ Learning through experience, or 'edutainment', which combines education with fun (e.g. serious games) is an example of the shift in emphasis within the educational domain towards experience in the transfer of information. The addition of elements of play positively influences the learning process⁶⁵ and the objectives are implicitly built into the game so that the player can lose himself in it. It is therefore not just about having fun, but about a different way of learning – through trial and error.⁶⁶

3.6 Changes in the social fabric of towns and villages

Public organisations and spaces can provide the socio-cultural infrastructure for people to meet one another and encounter other people, backgrounds and ideas. This stimulates mutual trust, recognition and solidarity,⁶⁷ and can also help prevent loneliness and develop mutual understanding. Meeting places, therefore, encourage a sense of community, which makes it more pleasant to live in a particular area.⁶⁸

However, the number of public organisations able to contribute to a community's social fabric is being drastically reduced.

Local authorities need to make million euro savings and are asking for more help from the general public, to keep a local shopping centre open for example. However, management, operation and maintenance tasks are often too difficult for volunteers, and it is possible that too much is being asked of them.

A study carried out by the Dutch newspaper the Volkskrant shows that at least 100 community centres have closed and many more are threatened with closure.⁶⁹ Their closure means a reduction in the number of public organisations able to contribute to social cohesion in and the vitality of local communities. This applies in particular to smaller rural communities, where facilities are increasingly under pressure due to the exodus to the towns.⁷⁰ As a result, a 'public third place' becomes more relevant. This third place, after home and work, provides people with a place to meet and the chance to create a sense of community.⁷¹

in 2025...

Magnet with stories that unite and excite

Dominique is visiting her grandma in the village she used to live in. She hasn't been back for a long time, as it's such a boring place. On the way there, she sees a colourful building where there used to be a big car showroom. While they drink their coffee, Dominique asks about the new building. Her grandma tells her enthusiastically about this local initiative, which has brought together the former community centre, a cultural organisation and a few local libraries in the area, and is hugely popular. The library has broadened its tasks, to include culture, preventative elderly care and reading. The library also runs council services and works closely with local service providers and event organisations. Artists and theatre groups also use the building, to work and practise, and exhibitions and performances are held regularly.

They go there for lunch so that Dominique can see it for herself. She does not really recognise it as a library. This is because the library has chosen to house almost no physical collection – a brave decision at the time. Lots of people read on their own electronic device. If they want to read a book, they can do so through a lending system. They can check whether the book is available and where, or they can have it printed for a small fee. It is also possible to order a bound version. The advantage of a printed version is that they are the first to read it – after that the book goes back into the system. Dominique's grandma says that she had to get used to the new system to start with, but that she's very happy with it now because she has met lots of people as a result. She also likes discussing the story or the writer with other people, because this makes the story more interesting and she learns so much. Grandma can often be found in the library, where she talks to people about the things she has been reading. The library uses this to add information to a story, for example information about where the story takes place. There are also people sitting talking to an author who wants to discuss some plot ideas with his fans. This will help him to write different plots within the story, making it more interactive.

After lunch Grandma waves to one of the children that she reads too. She also helps the older children with their homework or tells them her own stories, and they help her when she has problems with her e-reader again.

4

The library in transition

The changes taking place in Dutch society, outlined in Section 3, affect the interpretation and implementation of the library's purpose. In this section, we summarise the main purpose of the public library in 2025 and the most important changes in the way in which this purpose will be implemented. Finally, we compare this with the current core functions.

4.1 The purpose of the library

Knowledge and information will be essential production resources in 2025. Not just the development of knowledge, but also its exchange, will be increasingly important for the economy and competitive position of the Netherlands. The core purpose of the library is to contribute to and form a foundation for the knowledge and information society. This consists of stimulating, supporting, facilitating and equipping people with what they need to be able to participate in and contribute to the modern knowledge society. The library also plays an important socio-cultural role.

4.1.1 Contribute to the knowledge society

Stimulate reading and pleasure in reading

Participation in and contribution to the knowledge economy starts with literacy in the broadest sense. In Section 3.2, we saw how reading skills are essential for learning and how they increase the chance of obtaining a place in the knowledge economy.

Reading is also important for affective development, as it contributes to relaxation, the enjoyment of elegant language and escape from the pressures of daily life.

It also stimulates the fantasy, the imagination and creativity. Furthermore, it helps people to learn about the world, to empathise with characters and to seek new insights.

Reading and literature impart knowledge about other people's lives and provide a chance to compare other views with one's own ideas. They also encourage reflection, individual awareness, tolerance, empathy and understanding.⁷³ When the reading culture is under increasing pressure, providing support for the encouragement of reading and a reading and literary culture will be closer to the heart of the library service than it is now.

"THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP PERSONAL CREATIVITY AND PURSUE NEW INTERESTS IS IMPORTANT TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. TO ACHIEVE THIS, PEOPLE NEED ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE AND WORKS OF THE IMAGINATION."⁷²

Libraries will need to inspire, surprise and guide readers and – more importantly – non-readers with their books and stories. The library must be a place where people come not just to borrow books, but where books start to come to life. The library will provide pleasant surroundings for reading, a place where people can browse and get advice, and where books are read aloud and stories told. It will be an oasis in a hectic society, in an age of time pressure and technostress. People will come to learn about the story behind the book, to meet the author or to discuss literature in reading clubs. In response to changing consumer needs, libraries will need to offer a total experience that helps readers immerse themselves in the story, and where information is combined with aspects of culture, place and encounter. Of course, the library of the future will make use of effective forms of knowledge dissemination and transfer by responding to the way in which people collect and use information. The result will therefore be a balanced use of both traditional, printed media and digital services to provide the public values on which the library rests.

Developments that point to the fragmentation of the reading culture require an approach centred on promoting and encouraging reading. Libraries should focus not just on traditional forms of reading and reading resources, but also on new reading methods and storytelling, based on the different reading forms available and individual reading preferences. Digital and visual content could also be a valuable resource when it comes to encouraging imagination and creativity. Where scanning is more effective than concentrated reading, digital resources can also help improve effectiveness. It should not be forgotten that people who read for a purpose, for example instructions or work documents, are working on text comprehension just as much as anyone reading a book to relax. Libraries should do all they can to encourage and support all forms of reading, including texts other than those found in books.

Professional teaching support

Reading is important for instilling good literacy skills from a young age. The positive feedback loop that exists between reading for pleasure and literacy means it is important that children have a positive experience of reading from early childhood.⁷⁴ It is for this reason that libraries already work closely with other public partners such as educational institutions. Whereas schools are responsible for technical and reading comprehension skills, libraries – now and in 2025 – can make reading more pleasurable with a high-quality and varied collection and through its own expertise. The library is an expert when it comes to putting together a collection and ensuring that this collection meets the wishes, needs and experiences of the user. Libraries need to strengthen and expand on this supporting role, which requires a proactive attitude on their part.

The library in 2025 must be the natural professional partner for education. It could also broaden its role in stimulating reading to include the pre-school and after-school domain by entering into partnerships with educational and social institutions such as playgroups, childcare centres, family centres and regional health authorities. The presence of a library adviser, or even a school library – already found in some schools in the Netherlands – brings the library close to the children. This creates even more opportunities for stimulating and supporting children in clocking up ‘reading miles’, and helps create a positive loop⁷⁵ and a more literate society.

‘ACQUAINTING CHILDREN WITH THE WORLD OF LITERATURE AND BOOKS INCREASES THEIR VOCABULARY AND LANGUAGE SKILLS WITH NO SPECIAL EFFORT. THIS PREVENTS LANGUAGE DEFICIENCIES AT AN EARLY STAGE, REDUCING THE CHANCE OF ILLITERACY’⁷⁶

Tackle illiteracy

It is not only young people who need to read more. Later on in life too and amongst older groups, reading remains important for the development of language skills. As described in Section 3, there is a large group of people in the Netherlands with low literacy skills. This group also requires special attention and support from the public library, such as special reading materials to bring them in contact with books. Libraries should be able to answer people's questions or to refer them to other language service providers, special courses or workshops. The library can also act as facilitator, by making space available or renting it out to course or workshop providers, and providing people who attend such courses with the opportunity to practise. The library can also organise special reading activities for the target group, such as library tours, readings or 'read together' clubs.

It can also provide training courses for companies, schools and other public organisations to reach more people in and raise awareness of the problems of the target group.⁷⁷ People who have difficulties with reading and writing are less likely to come to the library themselves, so that the library needs to actively focus on places where poor literacy skills are likely to be noticed. The library therefore needs to join up with partners in welfare and work, such as Job Centres, sheltered workshops, refugee agencies, integration centres and health centres.

Provide advice and support for information skills

The increasing volume of digital information and media that people need to deal with every day makes more and more demands of people in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding. It will become increasingly important to be able to manage the multitude and complexity of sources correctly. Libraries, as 'local media skill centres'⁷⁸, have a particular role to play in contextual information skills.

After all, searching, finding, selecting and interpreting information sources and knowing their quality and reliability – the contextual domain – has long been the expertise of libraries. The huge volume of digital information provides an opportunity for libraries to help people order, filter and pre-sort relevant digital content out of the mass of information available, from the high-quality and the hopeless, the inspiring and the manipulating. The library, as an adviser and trustworthy beacon, will help people navigate the world of information overload, and will surprise and inspire people in a world of extreme personalisation and filtered information.

It is possible that smart digital search engines will be developed in the coming years that limit or even take over the role of libraries in this area. Libraries therefore need to be flexible and pro-active to be able to respond to new situations.

Contribute to knowledge development and circulation

If we are to ensure that people can participate in the 21st century, it is important that they maintain their knowledge and skills throughout their lifetime. The new ways in which people are organising themselves and producing, learning and innovating require not just a focus on literacy, but increasingly on skills such as teamwork, creativity, communication, problem solving and critical thinking too (the 21st century skills). The library can help people develop these skills.

Although 'development and education' activities are currently aimed at younger groups, there is also a growing interest in helping older people continue to develop their skills. The growing emphasis on lifelong learning and continuous personal development means that more and more people will follow training courses after they have finished formal education; a lifetime of development and education.

For those people who have completed their formal education but would like to return to learning, the library can help by providing facilities for personal development, in an encouraging and guiding role.

The library can invite and challenge people to deepen and broaden their skills and take part in self-study and self-development, and can help them find suitable courses or workshops. This therefore means that the focus of public libraries on vulnerable groups in society will stay. In addition, talented people will be stimulated and challenged to further develop their talents. The library therefore has a role to play in the ambition of the Dutch government to achieve a place in the top five knowledge economies in the world.

By building on the various tasks of the library regarding improving reading skills and reading pleasure amongst various groups, the library of the future will be a spider in the web when it comes to promoting reading and literature in the Netherlands and combating illiteracy. In a society in which it is increasingly important to be able to read well but in which low literacy skills still exist and the printed book is less visible, the library is in the perfect position to make an essential contribution to reducing the decline in reading and literacy.

4.1.2 Socio-cultural role

There is increasingly a socio-cultural component to knowledge development. More and more often, knowledge is created and transferred within networks or communities – either physical or digital. However, as well as the knowledge element, a meeting place is also important in society. The library in 2025 will therefore make an important socio-cultural contribution to the knowledge society.

The library as modern socio-cultural market-place

One of the intriguing paradoxes of the global, digitised world is the increasing importance of place.⁷⁹ There is a tendency to believe that the physical library will disappear in the future. However, a trend that contradicts this is the growth in the number of semi-public and commercial service providers – even those that began as a web store – opening, or re-opening, a physical shop. Furthermore, despite all the digital possibilities, interactive platforms such as Skype still supplement, rather than replace, direct contact.⁸⁰ Although digitisation also affects the library sector, and digital innovation and developments have an important role to play, providing a physical space remains one of the most powerful social functions of libraries. This space is used partly to encourage work and learning, and partly to organise meetings and cross-cultural contact.

The library distinguishes itself from other meeting places through its public, easily-accessible, non-commercial and therefore trusted character.

Workplace and learning environment

There would seem to be a growing need for a library that provides a physical working and learning environment. For people who can not do so at home or elsewhere, the library will remain a welcome, accessible place for quiet study and work using modern facilities. These people will be inspired by images and sound (from authors, storytellers and filmmakers), follow courses and learn to use modern equipment which they cannot afford themselves and which is essential in a knowledge economy, where development is partly determined by technological innovation. The increasing need in our information society for lifelong learning and co-creation would seem to increase rather than decrease the need for such public workplaces.

Meeting place

Physical places for people to come together are a valuable addition to all the possibilities provided by digital resources. The closure of community centres and the decline in facilities in rural areas means that the need for physical public meeting places will become urgent. The library is able to take on an essential social role by continuing to provide such a place. Libraries offer an environment in which people can, should they wish, escape from the continuous pressure of being connected and where they can meet other people for personal contact. Based on its knowledge function, the library should become a present-day agora – a modern socio-cultural marketplace – that visitors can enter and leave as they wish. It should be a place that invites people to take part in or organise all kinds of activities. Stories can be told, authors can talk about their work, there can be debates, training courses and workshops, and people can attend lectures or walk-in sessions.

In this way, the building – at heart a library – becomes a place in which there is always something to do, but where the visitor does not have to take part and where nothing is expected of him. By focusing on meetings – accidental or planned – libraries stimulate real contact and give a feeling of being part of a community. In an age in which the number of lonely pensioners is increasing, people continue to move to the Netherlands, young people are looking for a suitable place to study and facilities are disappearing, this function certainly offers perspectives for the future. The physical library can make a valuable socio-cultural contribution to a city, town or village, not just in terms of the development and dissemination of knowledge, but also in terms of cohesion and preventing loneliness.

Because the library in 2025 is also a place in which everyone is welcome and there is something for everyone, it is also a place in which people come into contact with other cultures, ways of life and backgrounds. People will meet other people with different ethnic or religious backgrounds, ages or level of education. They will therefore learn about society and new points of view and form new opinions. This can help promote mutual understanding and bridge differences, so that the library also contributes to empathy in society.

“IN LIBRARIES WE LEARN ABOUT OURSELVES AND OTHERS AND ENHANCE THE SKILLS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO EMPATHY, TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING”⁸¹

Community involvement and active citizenship

The socio-cultural role of the library means that it should not just encourage involvement and mutual understanding between people and groups, but also an interest in public affairs in general. It can do this, for example, by inviting people to take part in local public debates, decision-making, issues or politics. By organising initiatives, the library can encourage and challenge people to take an interest in and responsibility for solving local issues.

It does this, as one of the few remaining public buildings, by bringing people into contact with public organisations and activities in which they can participate. It can also provide local and regional information and focus attention on local affairs, together with the municipality and other partners. Libraries could use their collections to provide more meaning and depth, and could encourage people to think about and contribute to improving the local community.

IN A COMMUNITY IN WHICH PEOPLE MEET, BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH AND BUILD UP STRONG TIES WITH EACH OTHER, THEY LEARN TO TRUST ONE ANOTHER, DEVELOP A SHARED ATTITUDE TO COLLECTIVE INTERESTS, ARE ABLE TO TEMPER THE PURSUIT OF PERSONAL INTERESTS, HAVE A STRONGER SENSE OF DUTY AND BECOME INTERESTED IN POLITICAL ISSUES.⁸²

Community involvement through the library in international literature

Community involvement relates to awareness and public participation. It is not just about the desire and ability to participate in society, but also the desire and ability to make a real contribution to and take responsibility for public issues. The library is assigned various roles with relation to community formation in the literature.

The neutrality of the library as a public space is seen by many as a positive feature, as it ensures that people from different backgrounds can feel comfortable participating in events or meetings that are held there. Participating in or attending a library activity can in itself be regarded as community involvement.⁸³

A more active form of community involvement takes place if library users also actively participate in dialogue in the public space. This fits in with the role that Skot-Hansen assigns the library in her modern thoughts on civil society – that of the ‘discursive room’. In this room, the focus is on stimulating dialogue between community members to encourage them to see things from a different perspective.⁸⁴

A Norwegian research project entitled ‘Public Libraries – Arenas voor Citizenship’ also supports the ideas of Skot-Hansen. In these arenas – or ‘public spheres’⁸⁵ – political and social issues can be discussed and solved, and debate and decision-making can take place between cultures and different demographic groups. These arenas also contribute to cross-cultural tolerance.⁸⁶

Aabo et al. (2010) assign the library a more guiding role. They refer to the support or referral role that libraries can provide in identifying activities and organisations in the community in which people would like to become involved, or in encouraging engagement with social and political community issues. They talk of improvement activities and make a link between library use and contact with politicians, participation in political activities, political parties or the local decision-making process, participation in other organisations, voluntary work, the signing of a petition, the donation of money to a political party or group or taking part in a protest. The library is described as a meta-meeting place – a place to find information or learn about organisations and activities in the local community.

4.2 Defining the function: collections to connections

A great change is going to take place in the way in which the library interprets its purpose in the coming years. The easier it gets to find information elsewhere, the less need there is for libraries to provide access to their own collections. Moving towards 2025, information will be used differently, and elements such as connection, networking and community will become more important. Information dissemination will become more of a two-way process, in which the distinction between author, reader and publisher (consumer and producer) becomes more and more blurred. Learning will increasingly take place outside the formal structures. Aided and stimulated by modern communication technologies, people will organise themselves differently – sometimes globally and often with no hierarchy – around certain themes and interests. Community connections, knowledge sharing and synergy will become more important, and the intelligence of the community increasingly used to answer questions, stimulate creativity and innovate. In this new future, the library will focus on creating, stimulating and facilitating exchange and cooperation. The focus will therefore shift from providing access to collections or information, on-site or elsewhere, to creating connections. The different types of connections are examined below.

4.2.1 Connections between people and information: the library as knowledge gateway

The public libraries of the past focused on a balanced collection of books, newspapers and magazines, and later music and films. They did not monopolise information and culture, but provided access for all. The increasing popularity of new, digital media has made it easier for people to access all kinds of information and culture, as a result of which public libraries need to redefine their information task. Using Google, it is now much easier to look for and find information, much of which is available online, either free of charge or at a relatively low cost. User information, of interest to marketers, is sometimes part of the transaction between information provider and user.

In the future, people will no longer come to the library for information carriers such as printed books, CDs and DVDs. Although we do not know how long this will take, it is almost certain to happen. The effects of this on the physical collections of public libraries are currently uncertain and difficult to predict. The question also arises as to what the role of public libraries will be in providing access to digital sources of information and culture.

Will this role take them into people's homes? What can libraries do to make digital information access within the library building a unique experience, and how will this compare with the access provided by private service companies and publishers?

Information service

Even though knowledge and information will be available digitally, this does not mean that everyone will be able to access it at home. Even in 2025, there will still be information that has not been digitised, and that which is available digitally will not necessarily be freely available to all. In addition, not every household will have a state-of-the-art connection and the latest equipment to be able to use the newest media, such as moving images and sound, games and 3D. Also, some digital collections will – due to licensing restrictions – only be available at physical locations. This means, therefore, that as long as its public function requires it, the library will where possible continue to ensure access to all kinds of information.

E-books

Although we cannot say how people will be reading in ten years' time, a large-scale shift from paper books to e-books is still expected to take some time. The e-reader market is in development, more and more people are reading on tablets, and e-book sales are growing, although slowly.

Some people see the e-book as a godsend, others swear by paper. There is a very real chance that people will still be reading and borrowing printed books in ten years' time, although the borrowing of paper books is expected to decline. Of course, libraries need to respond to these developments by changing with user demands. One obvious development would be to lend e-books. Because it is likely that other providers will start a similar service, it is important that library activities are developed to closely reflect market changes.

The first criteria must be that the service provided by public libraries fits in with its public values and therefore responds to public demand. Whatever happens, the task of the public library will still be to encourage people to discover the world of books and stories and to help them find their way in this world. Even if users obtain books through other means, the library will still have an important role to play in inspiring and advising people. Should the e-book become the dominant format, the library could provide space for what may be a niche market in physical books. The presence of physical books in the library of 2025 would therefore seem to be a fact, rather than an uncertainty.

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The number of public libraries in the Netherlands has decreased significantly in recent years.

Figures from Statistics Netherlands (CBS) show that there are still 162 library organisations in the Netherlands that manage a total of 1,063 library locations. Only a few years ago, in 2005, there were 341 organisations and 1,080 library locations. However, the number of service outlets has actually increased.

7.870

Dutch public libraries are employing fewer staff.

In 2012, a total of 7,870 people worked in Dutch libraries compared to 9,010 in 2006. The number of library members also shows a downward trend. In 2012, a total of 1.7 million adults were a member of a public library down from 2.2 million adults in 1999.

92 mln

The total number of products on loan is going down.

In 2012 a total of 92.3 million products including books, magazines, DVDs, CDs, and games were borrowed from Dutch libraries. A year earlier in 2011, this was 132.6 million.

4.2.2 Connections between people: the library as platform

Another important connection that libraries will make in 2025 is between people. Knowledge creation is also a social process, partly arising through conversation and interaction. The library can become a platform for social learning where people, supported by library resources, can exchange ideas, work together, discuss, negotiate and co-create. Visitors to the library will come not just to learn, but also to share knowledge. The collection and other formal information references are important sources, but so are the users themselves. In response to the digitisation shift taking place, this connection will be both online and physical. The library's accessibility, central position in society and physical presence makes it the perfect location for gaining the specific 21st century skills (see Section 3.2) so essential in a modern knowledge economy.

There are also opportunities for libraries when it comes to social reading. By stimulating interactivity between readers, for example by inviting them to leave their opinion or reaction on a digital or physical discussion board, the library could make better use of the 'networking' of the reading experience. This could also give the reader a richer story experience. The library could also help and encourage its readers to share their own stories, in writing, verbally or in other ways. For example, it could provide a podium for people to promote their own work (books, memoirs, photo albums, and so on), which would contribute to a feeling of community and a collective memory.

4.2.3 Connections with and within the community: the library as social heart

The third connection is that with the local community and its activities. Libraries operate in the local social context, and their success depends on the connections they are able to make with and between people and the local community, local government, the local business community and local public organisations. Their firmly-anchored, physical presence in society and their accessible and trustworthy character mean that libraries have the potential to become local guides, or even community leaders. In this role, they can provide a podium for local public and cultural organisations, in accordance with individual requirements and local areas of interest. They therefore not only provide access to products, services and information from external parties, but also encourage cooperation between these parties.

Which organisations are we talking about? Given the education and development task, educational organisations would seem an obvious choice, especially as they have always been an important partner for the library. The library also shares common ground with adult education centres, heritage institutes and arts centres. Other possible partners have tasks related to the knowledge and socio-cultural role of libraries and direct contact with target groups less likely to find their own way to the library, or target groups that are in fact found in the library. Examples are private educational institutes, care providers, local radio stations, refugee centres, integration centres, cultural centres, the tourist board or childcare centres; these could all be interesting partners.

The step from working together to actually merging operations is already taking place, as tasks are united in multifunctional buildings to create a new, dynamic social hub, with the library as the beating heart of the community, in a central physical location. Many libraries are already firmly anchored in the local community, so that they form a natural location for public organisations to come together, join forces and together benefit the local community. This makes the library a true socio-cultural marketplace.

4.2.4 Connections between information sources: information in context

The fourth connection is that between information sources. By creating links between different sources and forms, information is placed in a setting or embedded; in other words put into context. This creates interconnections and a richer picture. A simple example is information about an author or a direct reference to other relevant books, films, themes or media. The library therefore not only provides information, but also enriches, broadens and deepens.

The library can create these links by (a) locating high-quality reliable content elsewhere, and (b) creating links between (contextualising) the content and its own collection. In this way, the library creates or selects a themed package that reflects the needs and interests of the local community and specific target groups. By bringing together both open access and closed (copyrighted) content in themes, making it accessible and connecting it to the local community, the library adds value to what is available elsewhere, for example using search engines such as Google. The library therefore helps people find their way through the information overload. By making a pre-selection, it also draws people's attention to new themes and points of view, exposing them to new opinions and perspectives and inspiring and challenging them.

As well as themed 'certified knowledge' (reliable, high-quality knowledge), it will also become increasingly important to provide 'community knowledge' (knowledge created within networks or communities). The library can actively invite the local community to contribute, for example by supplementing themed documentation with personal information (tagging, ratings and reviews), correcting or supplementing metadata, creating links to other documents or organising presentations and meetings. There is also a continuing role for libraries with regards to information skills, as described in Section 4.1.1, whereby libraries can help people create their own context.

It is highly likely that this kind of service will also be provided by private companies or even by the community itself. The growth in open access information and the semantic web will play an important role in this. As explained before, active entrepreneurship is an important requirement for a library, now more than ever, if it wants to play a prominent role in the future. This is no different when it comes to providing contextual information, if the library is to compete with other providers and be able to give more, based on its core values.

4.3 What does this mean for the core functions?

The library focuses mainly on knowledge development and circulation, therefore fulfilling an important socio-cultural role. However, what does this mean for the core functions of the library? Well, as it turns out, they largely remain the same. The functions reading, learning and informing will become increasingly important in our knowledge society. If people are to develop and exchange knowledge, in other words if they are to learn, they need to be able to use information. And to do this, they need to be able to read. Reading therefore forms an essential starting point.

A continuing focus on personal development is a basic condition for participation in a rapidly-developing knowledge society.

The library has long supported educational institutions in their formal learning (learning in a school environment). The library, however, mainly provides opportunities for non-formal learning (outside school, but within an institution) and informal learning (outside a learning-focused setting). As described in previous sections, the emphasis is on the transfer of knowledge and information, and increasingly on knowledge circulation: encouraging the exchange of information. It is also about inviting and encouraging people to take part in self-study and self-development outside formal structures and stimulating cooperation and co-creation.

The informing function runs the greatest risk of becoming obsolete because of digitisation. Even so, the library will continue to play an essential role, not only in helping people gain access to information, but most importantly in equipping them to use it. The library also has an important role to play in managing and drawing attention to reliable and less reliable sources, at an easily-accessible, trusted and central location. The informing function also means that the library will contribute to the development of information skills. It is however possible that this function will be better provided elsewhere in the coming years as smart search engines are developed on the Internet that reduce the need for the library to provide this information function.

As we outlined earlier in this report, there are opportunities for the public library to develop into a modern, socio-cultural agora. The functions reading, learning and informing are so strong that they form the core of a stimulating meeting place, thus providing a place for the other two core functions as a matter of course. Meeting and debate are forms of connection perfectly suited to the modern library – authors who talk about their books, debates about books, book clubs, and numerous similar activities that mean there is almost always something to do in the library.

It is not enough to make books available at discount price; one must also find ways to have them read by those groups of people for whom they are intended. - E. Decpetiaux

To achieve this, the library needs to be run in an enterprising and dynamic way.

The library's role in art and culture is mainly linked to the other functions. Art and culture can be used to reinforce and illustrate these functions, for example through shows or exhibitions. The future library will need to strengthen its partnerships with other cultural institutes such as heritage centres, the performing arts (from the village hall to the theatre), amateur and professional arts centres, music schools, cinemas and theatre groups.

Such partnerships could be task-related, but could also involve joint marketing campaigns (discount schemes, information), for example. The library is an attractive partner for other cultural institutes due to the large number of visitors it attracts as a result of its broad function, and due to its accessibility, which means that 'difficult' target groups are more likely to visit the library than a theatre or concert hall.

in 2025...

The library as regional hub and breeding ground for innovation

Josh is a busy businessman coming to the end of a hectic day. He is happy to be able to leave the city behind him and head east. Once he is out of the city traffic, he switches on the car's self-navigation system so that he can focus on other things.

In the coming weeks, branding presentations will be held in the region to stimulate the exchange of knowledge relating to high tech materials. Josh is one of the initiators, and the first session is in a few days. The idea is that the presentations will provide insight into business innovation plans. Josh is particularly looking forward to the INtalk of an expert from India who, as inspiration for the kick-off, will be present on the immense screen. Other participants, physically present or remotely, will have the opportunity to input knowledge and ideas.

Many businessmen and women like to meet at the library as it is considered 'neutral' territory. For some, it has even become a place to hang out. It is inspiring to talk to other people involved in innovation, and you can feel the energy as you walk in. Although some were not sure it would succeed at the beginning, everyone now agrees that this innovation network has boosted the region's economic power.

As soon as Josh is in the municipality, a suggestion that he goes to the library to relax flashes up on his wrist, and it seems like a good idea. When he arrives, he can see a list of the week's activities displayed on the wall outside, including his own session. Josh goes through some last minute details with the information specialist at the library. The library will provide relevant information and valid examples during the sessions and ensure that everything is recorded. In the restaurant, Josh checks the details for the breakfast meeting the next morning. The idea is to go through the proposals during the breakfast and to bring the innovators in contact with investors who may be able to help them further.

When he is sure that everything is ready, Josh submits to the suggestion for a mental stretch to end his busy day – after all he came to the library to relax.

5

The road ahead

In the previous sections, we outlined how developments in and around the library sector will affect the library's core function in 2025, and the changes that need to be made as a result. In this section, we discuss the consequences of this: what are the important elements and key focal points if the library is to withstand these changes and continue to play a meaningful role in the future knowledge and information society?

5.1 Integrate the physical and digital

Libraries will move many of their services to digital channels. Although we are currently in a phase in which analogue and digital exist alongside one another, digital is growing strongly. Even so, the library will still require a physical space. The two domains should therefore supplement, not be independent of, one another: the digital library will complement the physical, and vice versa; they will reinforce and enrich one another. Each of the libraries – physical and digital – will invite the visitor to use the other. The challenge for the coming years is to make better use of this physical-digital duality. A visitor to the physical library should also be immersed in the digital world, and the same visitor to the digital library invited to take part in physical activities. The visitor's experience of both the physical and the digital library will therefore be more diverse and stimulating, creating a library that is more than the sum of its physical and digital parts. The different physical and digital channels through which the general public access the library should ideally function in close harmony, in accordance with the 'cross channel' model.⁸⁷ As this model is centred on the customer, and he decides which channel he will use to access the library, the libraries therefore need to make sure that the services they offer are provided synchronously on each of the channels, or that they at least refer to each other. Ideally, the services offered by all the libraries in the Netherlands should be similarly synchronised, creating a seamlessly-integrated library that provides print and digital content, advice and support and a learning environment.

5.2 Be responsive and sensitive to the local setting

A world in which developments follow one another in rapid succession requires a library that moves with the times; a library that is flexible, responsive and adaptive. It also requires a library that keeps up with developments in technology and the market and constantly monitors the alternatives.

If the library is to respond to the specific needs and desires of the local area, it also needs to be well-acquainted with the area. After all, the exact choices that libraries make with regard to the tasks they carry out and the way they do so will always very much depend on the local context: does the catchment area include a town, a village near a town, a village or a rural area? Is the library centrally located, or in the suburbs? How many people live in the catchment area? What is the state of the socio-cultural infrastructure?

What services do commercial parties already provide? What is the political set-up? A flexible development plan is important. This means that the library changes and adapts in stages, constantly reviewing the current situation and allowing for adjustments that anticipate new developments.

5.3 Room for an innovative, proactive approach

The rapid developments taking place in society (from new technologies and media to drastic cutbacks) require fundamental innovation in the physical and digital library. Digitisation creates both a need and opportunities for the development of new services and products that are more in keeping with the way in which people use knowledge and information. Innovation can also relate to the operational processes within the library. For example, there are opportunities for increasing efficiency in back office processes, for example in the systems for users, loans, personnel and financial data, based on open standards that make it possible to exchange library information. This could enable libraries to use the latest marketing techniques, for example to offer their customers a personal product range. Developments in society and in the library sector also require a high level of adaptability on the part of library staff. Technological developments and centralisation means that traditional tasks are disappearing and being replaced with new tasks as the services change.

A successful transformation to an innovative library based on connections assumes a proactive attitude on the part of the library; cultural entrepreneurship should therefore be a particular point of focus for the coming years. Successful socio-cultural entrepreneurs are alert, creative, bold and convincing, combine substance with marketing acumen and look for support for their organisation and services, also financially. They are constantly weighing up the balance between demand and supply-focused products, they network and enter into social alliances, and are open to the demands of the general public and market opportunities. However, being proactive also means that libraries need to take a critical look at and give a clear account of their activities. More than now, future libraries will need to evaluate the outcome of their social purpose and corresponding tasks so that they can make choices about scrapping old activities and replacing them with new, proactive activities.

Libraries will also need to take a broader look at their partners. We have already named several examples of social alliances. If libraries are to succeed they also need to examine possible partnerships with commercial organisations. Examples could be partnerships with publishers to encourage reading: although each has its own objectives, both parties working together can achieve more. Such a proactive attitude also requires the financial and legal freedom to enter into new partnerships and to experiment, without being tied down to existing performance agreements. This also entails an obligation to communicate the societal benefits of the library.

This can be done, as we have shown in this report. The functions of the public library are clear, but their implementation will require a daring, pro-active approach if they are to produce a thriving public library.

in 2025...

The library connects people with knowledge and each other

Eva's work in the library is getting more and more interesting, and she learns something new every day. She started on a work experience placement, but was soon asked to join the team. At first she was mostly working with books, but now she spends a lot more time working with people. As an information specialist, she connects people to sources and each other. Eva and her colleagues know a lot of people, have access to the communities and regularly contact these groups for specific activities in the library. She also invites people to act as a moderator or facilitator.

Eva can see that lots of people come to the library for inspiration. Visitors come to find stories, but also to bring their own stories. The library links their stories to the archives. Anyone can take part, which produces a rich archive based on the story of the local community. Visitors also come to her because they find it difficult to assess the value of information. Walk-in sessions are held every day to help people to search and to develop their ability to assess information. Plus, not everyone has those huge screens on the wall at home that make digital contact almost real, so that you can quite literally enlarge your world.

A group of students from a MediaCollege in the region have developed an application, together with the library and a few fanatical readers. The application allows people to read together, respond in real time and share opinions or discuss plots. It is also possible to join in with a game that registers how far you are, how fast and how well you read, how important other people find your opinions and how many messages you send and receive. The game adjusts the points according to your own reading level and capacity and how long you have been a member. After the first month, there were already more than 2000 participants. It is also possible to take part as a team, so that there are teams of neighbours, families and friends. There is a prize each month. A man who won the individual prize last month said that it was the first time in years that he had read a book from cover to cover. What is interesting for the library and other partners such as publishers is the statistics from the game. For example, Eva saw that more than one third of the readers often choose stories written by relatively unknown authors.

Notes

¹ The compartmentalisation of Dutch society refers to the division of society into separate groups based on religious and political beliefs. Each group had its own organisations in all areas of society: politics, healthcare, education, media, sport, and so on.

² Much of the information here was taken from Huysmans & Hillebrink (2008) and Huysmans (2013).

³ VOB and VNG, 2005.

⁴ Plasterk, 2008.

⁵ VNG/IPO/OCW, 2009.

⁶ *Memorie van Toelichting bij het wetsvoorstel stelsel openbare bibliotheekvoorzieningen*, Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, January 2014. At the time of publication, the bill was being considered in the Dutch Lower House.

⁷ Koontz & Gubbin, 2010

⁸ Koontz & Gubbin, 2010

⁹ *Kamerbrief Actualisering Bibliotheekwetgeving*, 7 December 2011; *Memorie van Toelichting bij de ontwerp bibliotheekwet*, Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, April 2013; *Advies Wet stelsel openbare bibliotheekvoorzieningen*, Council for Culture, 6 June 2013.

¹⁰ A letter to the Dutch Lower House talks for example of independence, multiformity, trustworthiness and accessibility; authenticity is also mentioned in the Explanatory Memorandum; the Council for Culture talks of balance, multiformity, quality, independence and accessibility.

¹² Huysmans & Hillebrink, 2008

¹³ Huysmans & Hillebrink, 2008; Ifla & UNESCO, 2008

¹⁴ Huysmans & Hillebrink, 2008, UNESCO, 1994

¹⁵ Huysmans & Hillebrink, 2008

¹⁶ The trends highlighted in this section are from a broader trends summary published by SIOB.

¹⁷ Scientific Council for Government Policy, 2013.

¹⁸ For example, YouTube films to help learn for an exam or a guitar lesson, TED videos and open lectures from different universities (MOOC: Massive Open Online Course).

¹⁹ OECD, 2013.

²⁰ *Actieplan Laaggeletterdheid 2012–2015 ‘Geletterdheid in Nederland’*.

²¹ National Endowment for the Arts, 2007; Douglas Willms & Scott Murray, 2007.

²³ PWC, 2013. Please also see *Feiten & Cijfers geletterdheid. Overzicht van de gevolgen van laaggeletterdheid en opbrengsten van investeringen voor samenleving en individu*. Amsterdam: Stichting Lezen & Schrijven (in collaboration with Maastricht University School of Business and Economics Educational Research & Development).

²⁴ Buisman et al., 2013.

²⁵ Fouarge et al., 2011.

²⁶ www.leesmonitor.nu

²⁷ www.leesmonitor.nu; Krashen, 2004

²⁸ Mol & Bus, 2011

²⁹ Buisman et al., 2013

³⁰ Kortlever & Lemmens, 2012

³¹ www.leesmonitor.nu

³² Huysmans & De Haan, 2010

³³ Cloin et al., 2013

³⁴ <http://www.siob.nl/bibliotheekmonitor/trends-media-informatie/boeken/algemene-boekengekochte-aantallen/item90>, e-book sales are included from 2011 onwards.

³⁵ Bakker, 2013

³⁶ Examples are instruction films on YouTube, films to accompany articles in online news sites and infographics to explain things to customers.

³⁷ De Korte & Alberse, 2013

³⁸ *Visiebrief digitale overheid 2017, Minister van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties*, 23 May 2013; <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2013/05/23/visiebrief-digitale-overheid-2017.html>

³⁹ Gillebaard & VanKan, 2013; Bommeljé & Keur, 2013

⁴⁰ Van Deursen, 2010

⁴¹ Various studies are discussed in Bontje & Studulski, 2013.

⁴² Notten et al., 2009

⁴³ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, Staline. *Verdere groei mobiel internetgebruik*, 23-10-2012

⁴⁴ Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2012; Gillebaard et al., 2010

⁴⁵ Gillebaard & Vankan, 2013

⁴⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en>

⁴⁷ Voogt & Roblin, 2010

⁴⁸ <http://www.kennisnet.nl/themas/21st-century-skills/vaardigheden/benodigde-vaardigheden-voor-de-21ste-eeuw/>, viewed 6-12-2013.

⁴⁹ Sales figures from *Stichting Marktonderzoek Boekenvak/GfK Retail and Technology*, 2013.

⁵⁰ BISG, 2013

⁵¹ James Surowiecki in *The New Yorker*: http://www.newyorker.com/talk/financial/2013/07/29/130729ta_talk_surowiecki.

⁵² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filter_bubble, see too Eli Pariser TEDtalk: http://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles.html.

⁵³ Van den Berg et al., 2011

⁵⁴ Surowiecki, 2008

⁵⁴ This requires a diverse population and independent crowd members, otherwise there is a risk of developing ‘collective blindness’.

⁵⁶ Leadbeater, 2008

⁵⁷ For an explanation of what *hackerspaces*, *makerspaces* en *fab labs* are and their differences, see De Boer, 2013 (in Dutch).

⁵⁸ De Boer, 2013, also <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/03/27/white-house-hangout-makermovement> & Anderson, C. (2012). *Makers, the new Industrial Revolution*.

⁵⁹ Den Ridder, 2011. *Praten over boeken: de sociale waarde van leesgroepen*. In: Van den Berg et al., 2011

⁶⁰ Walter, 2013.

⁶¹ This app was removed during the writing of this report

⁶² Cloin et al., 2013; Cloin et al., 2010

⁶³ Forrester, 2012: The Always Addressable Customer.

<http://www.forrester.com/The+Always+Addressable+Customer/fulltext/-/ERES74101?intcmp=blog:forlink> in de Korte & Alberse, 2013.

⁶⁴ Van Hamersveld, 2013.

⁶⁵ Van Hamersveld, 2013.

⁶⁶ Schermer et al., 2008.

⁶⁷ Blokland-Potters, 2006.

⁶⁸ *Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling*, 2005.

⁶⁹ Volkskrant, 21 February 2013.

⁷⁰ Steenbekkers et al., 2008.

⁷¹ The term ‘third place’ was first introduced by sociologist Ray Oldenburg in his book *The Great Good Place*. The term refers to the social setting outside the two usual social settings: the home (first place) and the place of work (second place). Third places are characterised by neutrality, conversation, accessibility and a welcoming, warm environment. They are seen by many as important for creating a sense of community.

⁷² IFLA, 2010.

⁷³ See for example Kidd & Castano, 2013.

⁷⁴ Mol, 2010; Mol & Bus, 2011.

⁷⁵ refers to the theory that reading skills and reading pleasure positively reinforce one another: people who are competent in reading get more enjoyment from it, so that they read more, and become even better at it (reading speed, vocabulary, spelling and comprehension), enjoy it even more, and read even more (Mol, 2010).

⁷⁶ *Actieplan Kunst van Lezen 2012-2015*.

⁷⁷ De Kleijn et al., 2011.

⁷⁸ In a government vision on media skills, public libraries are called physical ‘media skills desks’, as well as ‘media skill centres’: <http://www.siob.nl/media/documents/mediawijsheid-ocwbrochure-mediawijsheid-1.PDF>.

⁷⁹ Glaeser, 2005 in WRR, 2013.

⁸⁰ Bathelt & Turi, 2011 in WRR, 2013.

⁸¹ <http://www.imls.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/21stCenturySkills.pdf>.

⁸² Schnabel et al., 2008.

⁸³ Goulding, 2009.

⁸⁴ Skot-Hansen, 2001 in Audunson, 2005.

⁸⁵ Closely related to Jürgen Habermas’s public sphere theory. He describes a public sphere as a public place where people can meet each other and engage in critical debate about matters of public concern. Habermas, J., 1962: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: Polity.

⁸⁶ Audunson, 2005.

⁸⁷ A model in which the different channels through which products and services are delivered and the channels through which suppliers and buyers communicate with one another are integrated. The client chooses through which channel he wants to buy or communicate: online, offline, by telephone, by text message, collection, home delivery, and so on.

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Appendix 2 Committee acknowledgements

This report took four months to compile. We debated the future social function of the public library, based on trend reports and our own experiences, and invited several guests to contribute. The secretariat also spoke with a few people on behalf of the committee to test and flesh out some ideas. The committee is very grateful to these people for their contribution.

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In addition to this report, a summary and a trends report have also been published in Dutch.



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