

Designing Library Facilities for Everyone? Providing Space for Informational Participation

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Abstract

The concept of informational participation is a holistic approach to the problems associated with the 'digital divide'. It assumes that 'digital divide' is not only a dichotomizing problem of having physical access to information technology or not, but an accumulation of technical, psychological, intellectual and social barriers, excluding individuals from access to and comprehension of information resources. Individual answers and social strategies must be aligned to reach the goal of informational participation for a maximum quantity of people. The museum studies already discussed such approaches. The paper considers statements by Volker Kirchberg (2005) to demonstrate how these studies can be worthwhile for the discussion of the topic. Finally, conceptions and suggestions are proposed how libraries can transform their virtual and physical spaces into places for actual informational participation. The paper argues that providing space for informational participation is one of the key challenges for libraries nowadays.

1 Introduction

"We, the representatives of the peoples of the world, assembled in Geneva from 10-12 December 2003 for the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, declare our common desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." (WSIS, 2003)

The Geneva Declaration of Principles for the development of the information society sounds like the preamble for the constitution of a new society. In fact, the structures and problems of the 'old' industrial society are not blown away by a 'digital revolution'. Quite the contrary some social barriers and gaps are getting higher and wider during the development of the knowledge-based society in a global context. The many different ways in which people are excluded from the information or knowledge society are normally subsumed under the buzz phrase 'digital divide'. Digital divide normally means that there are people with access to information technologies, the 'haves' and people without this access, the 'have-nots'. In the dichotomic technical logic of the information society the answer to this problem was to get the 'have-nots' connected to information technologies, especially the internet, so that they become 'haves'. Since the turn of the century we have become a little bit more deliberated. The digital divide is an informational divide now and we are aware that there is a social context for the problems of the knowledge society that existed before the invention of digital

information technology. Socio-economic, cultural and value-connected reasons are playing a decisive role in the context of the informational divide. Only a more complex sociological approach can help us to find a satisfactory response to this global challenge. The concept of informational participation tries to meet the requirements of this process. For the library and information sector, informational participation is not only an ethical issue, but the crucial question for their role in the arising knowledge society.

Coevally, there is a renaissance of space in sociology as well as in the library sector. Especially in Germany there has been a trend to argue whether the physical library will exist in 20 or 30 years or not. In the 1990s it became fashionable to predict the end of the library as a physical space. But since 1990 the development in the library sector angled of. The digital library is not the end of the physical library but it is the consequential completion of the library in the developing knowledge society. The physical space of the library is attracting a lot of attention today because it has been challenged by the virtual spaces of information technology. It sounds like a paradox, but the more digital technology infiltrates people's everyday live, the more important physical spaces become (see Eigenbrodt 2006a, pp. 140-141).

Also in the social sciences we can observe this new dynamic in the discussion about space. The increase in velocity of information and the relativisation of distances are the main issues of the globalized knowledge society. This means a new approach to the concepts of time and space. It is not possible for the social sciences to refer uncritically to the traditional concepts of space when they are trying to analyze the meaning of space for today's society (see Löw 2001, p. 12). A sociological based library and information science has the same problem. The library and information sector needs new ideas about the meaning of space. There are discussions about public places and spaces, living rooms, lounges and meeting places, agorae and something called the 'third space' sounding like the title of a 1950s science fiction movie. There are also some empirical studies about the requirements of today's library spaces. But we can notice a lack of theory in these studies and analyzes. We need to know more accurately what we are talking about when dealing with the 'knowledge society' and the 'informational divide', we have to define clearly the concepts of space we use in our research and last but not least we must enable the information professionals to talk well founded when they put libraries on the political agenda. To reach these goals we have to discuss a lot of concepts and ideas about the connection between people, their environment and the ways in which they make decisions about this environment, called politics. Based on the concepts of Hannah Arendt and Lucius Burckhardt, I presume that space is constituted in the centre of this triangle (see Eigenbrodt 2006b, p. 17). In this paper, I want to propose some tentative answers to the questions related to physical space and social changes.

The fundamental challenge of the library and information sector is to provide physical and virtual space for informational participation. The concept of informational participation is based on the insight, that the informational divide can only be bridged on an individual level. The socio-economic, educational, cultural and value-based reasons for the individual lack of intellectual (and secondary technical) access to information have to be analyzed and resolved and the individual needs to get the abilities and skills to satisfy its information needs. In a first step I will describe the concept of informational participation on the background of the informational divide.

Museums have to face the same problems in their specific environments. Therefore museum studies discuss similar questions. The outcomes of these discussions are several publications

about the "social functions of museums". Based on the book of the same title by Volker Kirchberg (2005), I will discuss some similarities and differences between his cognitions and the library and information sector. My aim is to highlight those approaches which are useful for the concept of informational participation as well. Space plays a central role in the argumentation of Kirchberg, for him it is the crucial category on the mesosociological level. Linking the society as a whole (the macro-level) and the individual (the micro-level) through space may be a helpful tool to reach the goals I mentioned above.

But space is not only an abstract sociological concept. Libraries and information centres are manifestations of space in bricks, steel and concrete. The outcomes of the discussions must be more than philosophical reflections or political arguments. Providing space for informational participation also means building the informational architectures in a physical and a virtual sense of the word. In the final part of this paper I will offer some ideas how to design environments that offer enough space for informational participation. But is it possible to design library facilities for everyone?

2 The informational divide and the concept of informational participation

The dichotomic concept of 'digital divide' describes the problems connected to informational exclusion from a technological point of view. Individuals are seen as end-users who either have access to information technology or who don't have the facilities to get connected to the digital world. International organisations, NGOs, governments and even libraries have been starting numerous actions without previous planning. 'Bridging the digital divide' has become a slogan in the discussions about the future of the knowledge society. But the technical connection to information networks is an important but not sufficient condition for access to information. On the one hand there are questions of more vital importance like access to potable water, food and medical care which have to be solved, on the other hand there are environmental and technical problems associated with the building of networks and distribution of computer-hardware (see Eigenbrodt 2007, p. 164). In some cases there may be more useful and efficient ways of getting connected to information resources than the individual internet access. HIV/AIDS related information for example cannot wait until an internet connection is installed in every village in Africa. It must be distributed urgently and with priority. This is a good example for the fundamental issue. It is not about wiring and selling laptops, it is about the appropriate way of satisfying information needs.

The technological developed countries already have high numbers of internet connections per household. The diffusion of computing and internet access is astonishing. Access is available at home, at work, in school, and in the library. But what do these numbers say about the informational competence of a society or an individual?

"As the technology penetrates into every crevice of society, the pressing question will be not 'who can find a network connection at home, work, or in a library or community center from which to log on?' but instead, 'what are people doing and what are they able to do, when they go online'" (DiMaggio, Hargittai 2001, S.3)

Has the digital gap really been bridged when people are playing online games, watching videos or googling their everyday-questions? Maybe it has in the technological sense of the word: People are connected and information is being transferred. They are consuming the new mass medium WWW. I don't want to be a culture pessimist: Consuming a mass medium is not evil and you may have a learning effect when you are studying *Wikipedia* for instance. I

think, there are no rules for a 'proper use' of the possibilities the internet offers. But I think there is a misunderstanding about the concept of 'knowledge society'.

The concept of 'information society' is connected to the distribution of information based on technological and economic questions. Walther Umstätter talks about "Nationalökonomie des Geistes" (2005). And also the concept of informational ethics ("Informationsethik") by Rainer Kuhlen (2004) focuses on economic and legal questions. Both are delivering important arguments for the political discussions because informational value added and intellectual property rights are more discussed than people's individual level of education. But it is my strong opinion, that we can't reduce our professional ethics to technical and economic questions. Information is only the resource for the production of knowledge and it is the way, knowledge can be stored and distributed. But you need to find the proper information and to understand the code of the information in order to create knowledge. An open access journal of biogenetics for example is adequate for the scientist but it won't help the farmer searching for information about gene-modified seeds. In the knowledge society the only way to reach cultural, political and even economical participation is to find the proper and intelligible information matching the individual's information needs. The idea of informational participation tries to describe this issue.

2.1 Informational participation and the knowledge society

Nowadays we have to deal with a paradox concerning informational participation. On the one hand the number of internet connections via DSL increases every year, on the other hand, especially in Germany, there is a growing near-illiterate social class:

"computer and internet access do not automatically lead to meaningful uses of the internet, but [...] there are several other important determinants. The digital Divide is not only about access, but also about other characteristics that define the social opportunities of an individual such as gender, education, employment status, IT skills and an ability to speak foreign languages, among others." (Gil-Garcia et al 2006, p. 140)

The real problems of the informational divide are becoming apparent after the technical connection is guaranteed. Most internet-resources worldwide request English language skills for example. All non-English speakers, even when they speak French, Spanish or Mandarin are excluded from the information of the World Wide Web in large part. Another problem connected to the status of education is the ability to filter meaningful information. I think there is no more or less 'important' information. All information can be important when used at the right time by the right person. But the information, an individual gets when searching the internet can be meaningful for her/him or not. Every reference librarian knows the key questions for the research process. But someone who has no college or even high school education will get difficulties. Those people are easier to satisfy with some non-verified information about their topic and they are easier to frustrate when they get no matching results to their retrieval. There are two misunderstandings currently circulating in the discussions about 'social software' and web 2.0:

- a) Software is a non-physical, functional part of computing but it is not 'social' because it can not interact with people although it may operate the media of interaction.
- b) Not every use of the internet provides information literacy or media competence. Chatting, playing online games or sharing data via internet may be useful activities but they are not providing understanding for the process of information retrieval in the World Wide Web.

Many scholars discussing freedom of information and digital technology have already been widening their horizon. Not only the legal and economic issues are being discussed but also

the individual questions related to the informational divide. One important issue is the non-use of digital technology. People who do not like to use ICT or who decide to stop using this technology although they had the opportunity are often ignored or considered as outdated from an arrogant point of view. But there are reasons apart from conservatism or technophobia why people do not or can not use digital technology.

"Indeed, many current assumptions about non-use of ICT may perhaps be best approached in terms of understanding the information needs of the individual, rather than the perceived information needs of society. This involves accepting, that people are more than simply 'end users' [...] any understanding of why an individual is not making use of ICT should start from a bottom-up perspective." (Selwyn 2006, p.275)

This bottom-up perspective is the key issue of the concept of 'informational participation'. Storing, processing and transferring data are technical processes depending on the medium. Searching, understanding and making out the meaning of information are individual processes. Informational participation is about helping individuals and groups to get and understand the information they need through the adequate medium. ICT can make this business easier and more comfortable but there must not be an antagonism between different kinds of information technologies. In some cases sewing a quilt may be the more appropriate way of bringing people and their information together, than using a weblog for example.

I would like to state four important characteristics of informational participation:

1. The individual is at the centre of attention.
2. Technology is a means of reaching informational participation. It is not inherently informational participation.
3. People must be enabled to find the information they need having regard to their social, cultural and educational background.
4. Open spaces and open access are the basis of informational participation.

This is only a provisional list and it maybe extended by further discussion. At the same time we have to discuss strategies how to provide informational participation for as many individuals as possible.

2.2 Strategies for informational participation

Of course libraries can't solve the problems of the knowledge society by solely developing strategies for informational participation in their field. But they have always been key players in education. The public idea about their role in education and lifelong learning may vary from country to country – in the case of Germany only few politicians are just becoming aware of the relevance of libraries – but libraries have to reposition themselves in order to serve their communities and to survive the social changes. I don't talk about communication here because I think communication is not a strategy but the key to informational participation. Literally, library service is communication and without communication there would be no basis for a social approach to libraries.

2.2.1 Freedom of information and freedom of opinion

Freedom of information seems to be a fundament of democratic societies. The German constitution conjoins freedom of opinion, information, press, arts and science in article 5 of the *Grundgesetz*. But those principles are challenged by different constellations today. There is an ongoing discussion about copyright with conflicting interests of publishing companies, artists and end-users. Terrorists are using the internet for communication and propaganda while intelligence and police are collecting and processing data without legal basis. Citizens

are threatened by terrorists and spied out by domestic or foreign authorities by use of digital technologies. Therefore libraries have to become places, people can trust to. When the ALA fought against the *Patriot Act* for example, it did not promote terrorism or an insecure US, but sent out a signal to all people who did not want to give up their civil rights. Librarians have to develop their strong professional ethics and they have to find answers to the current problems. International cooperation must not ignore the violation of freedom of information.

2.2.2 Open access

As I mentioned above, open access is not only about digital scientific resources. It is the best example how space is constituted in the interaction of individuals, environment and politics. Barrier free access to a building is connected to political decisions, the configuration of the environment and the abilities of the individuals using these facilities.

Open access does concern the physical space of a library as well as the virtual space. Libraries need to remove barriers in their buildings and in their digital facilities and resources. But digital open access – golden or green way – is a strategy requiring several partners and investments, whereas physical open access is easier to decide and to implement. The sticking point on the way to informational participation is limited access to information resources; and people without experience are easier to frustrate than others.

2.2.3 Encouragement

People tend to create comfort zones around themselves, they don't like to leave. Like Bilbo Baggins is cited in *The Lord of the Rings*: "It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door. You step onto the road and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to." (Tolkien 1994, p. 98). Even if there are various other reasons for the non-use of ICT, one important thing, especially for older people, is that they are intimidated by technologies they don't understand. Selwyn found out that besides older people housewives and long-term unemployed people are more likely to be "rare-users of computers." (Selwyn 2006, p. 278). They are not familiar with digital technology, often shy in the presence of graduate people and generally speaking less self confident than better educated, younger and employed people. Encouragement means developing ideas to motivate those individuals to use information resources off the beaten track and step onto the road to knowledge society. But this has to be done carefully and with respect for the knowledge and wisdom those people already have; sometimes collected in decades. Although this is only one example of what encouragement means, I think it makes obvious, what challenges are waiting for us.

2.2.4 Networking

Networking is a political necessity as well as a strategy for informational participation. Not only classical institutional relationships like kindergarten, schools or adult education centres are important. Public libraries as well as academic libraries will have to look around for additional partners. Where are the people we don't reach with our services and resources and where do our users go, when they are searching information outside our libraries? Networking helps us to understand the information needs of our users and it helps individuals to find their way to our services. It is important for many people to orient themselves on the basis of their local environments. They need a network of familiar people, places and interactions where they feel comfortable. But this local orientation is not necessary the antagonist to a global networking. Libraries have to become hubs for the individual connections between the global digital world and the local communities (see Audunson 2004, p. 439).

2.2.5 Conservation and activation of cultural heritage

Last autumn the *Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek* in Weimar reopened its historical rooms after a fire disaster. The celebration of this important day for the cultural heritage in Germany was one of the rare occasions when libraries attract medial attention. Federal President Horst Köhler (2007) stated in his address:

"The opportunity to participate in cultural life, in other words, to have access to art and culture, to history and scientific thought – that is the right of every young person. Not just our schools but also our public libraries are educational venues of crucial importance. [...] Libraries are the collective memory of mankind. We must preserve this memory and this knowledge intact, so it will also be of service to future generations. We must ensure also the long-term preservation of our cultural heritage in printed and digital form."

This connection between education and the preservation of cultural memory made the speech important. The image of libraries as book museums is very popular in Germany. A time-honoured library with wooden stacks and gold-lettered leather bindings usually catches more attention than a well equipped modern 24/7 learning centre. (see Eigenbrodt 2006a, p.143) But Köhler underlines the interdependence of knowledge society and cultural heritage. Preservation and even presentation of original prints remains an important task while activating the content by digitalization is becoming one crucial issue for libraries.

The suggested strategies paraphrase the recent core activities of libraries as well as new challenges. But the library and information sector is not the only cultural and educational branch facing these developments. Museums have to attend and help shape the development of the knowledge society considering informational participation as well.

3 Museum studies as resources for a discussion about informational participation

Museums and libraries share a long common history but they have been developing their own social functions and position. Museum Studies have stronger affiliations with sociology and cultural studies than library and information science. So it is obvious to consider their publications when discussing the role of libraries in informational participation. In 2005 German sociologist Volker Kirchberg published his study *Gesellschaftliche Funktionen von Museen*. He examines the social functions of museums from macro-, meso-, and microsociological perspectives:

"Sociological thinking on a meso-level occupies the »space« between micro and macro. This is meant literally because this specific discussion of social functions of museums is focused on causes and consequences in urban spaces." (Kirchberg 2005, p. 361)

This is strongly connected with the triangle I mentioned above. The space of the museum is constituted in the same way as the space of the library. Both have their origins in the interaction of individuals, environment and politics. I would like to stress exemplarily two issues in order to show the possible benefit of Kirchberg's study for the examination of space in Library and Information Science.

3.1 Change management as a challenge for museums and libraries

Kirchberg's first and foremost postulation is a more active role of museums in the social development. In the industrial society museums had been public places for the bourgeoisie. They collected the items the society regarded as worthy of preservation. Representative spaces have been built to exhibit a choice of these partly enormous collections. Like the contemporary libraries, these museums of the 19th and early 20th century functioned as

heterotopias in Foucault's sense of the word. (see Eigenbrodt 2005, p. 16) But heterotopias are a reflection of society hence not a part of it. One of Foucault's most prominent examples is the cemetery, a place where society comes to a halt, being perfectly reproduced in the positioning and design of the tombs and gravestones. Heterotopias are not places intended to play an active role in society and its changes. Against this background, Kirchberg notices a change in the self-image of museums. Museums want to become constituent parts of new developments instead of fossilized heterotopias of the industrial society. Multifunctional and multidimensional interactions between museums and society are reflecting the social changes in general. (Kirchberg 2005, p. 19)

One effect of these attitude changes is the boom of museums in the last decade. People seem to love museums and museums have been becoming essential factors in tourism and urban development. There are many studies about this phenomenon. But is it possible to transfer the findings from these studies to the library sector? Today museums are much more self-confident than libraries are. Libraries are making their first steps in a process of developing an awareness of their function in a future society. This is the precondition to get a better position in public awareness. But Kirchberg also points out that the 'boom' of museums is only a qualitative phenomenon. Quantitative analyses show that especially German art museums are suffering from decreasing numbers of visitors. On the other hand besides historic presentations, art exhibitions get the most public attention. (Kirchberg 2005, p.28) All in all museums will never get as much visitors as libraries already have. Therefore we will have to concentrate on the qualitative aspects of the museum boom instead of the statistics.

Kirchberg examines the internal and external reasons for the changing process of museums. Some of them seem to be very familiar to discussions in the library sector, for example the lacking financial resources, new technical possibilities and demographic changes. After subsuming the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the social transition of museums, Kirchberg outlines the social challenges for museums:

1. Competitors: Regardless of their social position, people can choose their recreational and cultural activities from a wide range today.
2. Technology: Particularly interactive media is a challenge for museums.
3. Politics: Political power needs representation and tends to materialize itself in institutions of high culture like museums.
4. Customer focus: The demands of the target group have to be identified and matched with the presentation in a continuing evaluation process.
5. Budget: Fundraising becomes more and more important.
6. Marketing: Adapting new strategies and management methods

(Kirchberg 2005, p.40)

All these challenges have in common that they originate from the current social changes associated with the transformation from Industrial to Knowledge Society. Libraries are being confronted with the same problems and they are searching for answers like museums do. One possible alternative seems to be the creation of spaces which are recognizable, event-orientated, effective and predictable for the customer like the branch of a fast food company.

3.2 Informational fast food

Volker Kirchberg concentrates in his macrosociological perspective on the concept of McDonaldization, originally formulated by George Ritzer (1998). This postmodernist approach could be useful for analyzing changes in the museum sector, even when there are no empirical studies available yet. Basically *McDonaldization* is about the layout and the culture of

institutions in a postmodern society. (Kirchberg 2005, p.64) I would like to highlight four important issues concerning libraries as well as museums:

1. The exchange value of information and signs
2. The demand orientation of cultural and educational services and products
3. The shortage of financial and staff resources
4. Uncertainty of the future institutional role

Since the beginning of the *Gutenberg Galaxy*, libraries have always been dealing mainly with copies. Therefore they are generally not discussing the issue of authentic original and copy like museums do. But under the surface of the discourse about digitalization there is also a conflict between authenticity and copy.

According to Ritzer there are four objectives characterizing *McDonaldization*:

1. Calculability – The institution's performance is measured by the output only
2. Predictability – The facilities are standardised with no creative leeway
3. Efficiency – Everything is being organised in the most effective way
4. Control – Visitor behaviour is being manipulated by suggestive control

As you can see, there is a partially correlation between these two lists. Kirchberg extends Ritzer's list by adding commodification which means the expansion of market trade to the area of culture and education in this context. (Kirchberg 2005, p. 365) But is there a tangible connection between library space and fast food restaurants? Let me explain one example. *Starbuck's* coffee shops are selling coffee and other beverages to various customer groups around the world. But is the quality of the coffee or the high standard of service the selling point of *Starbuck's*?

"In a world that can be cruel and cold, it is nice to sip hot tea (or coffee, if you wish) in nice, safe surroundings. Friendly people are a big plus. Comfy chairs and sturdy tables are a key part of the equation." (Perry 2006)

Perry describes in his weblog the importance of a special '*Starbuck's* atmosphere' for his individual experience. But this individual experience is standardized and reproducible in all *Starbuck's* coffee shops around the world.

When library professionals discuss about creating 'living rooms' or 'meeting places', they partly have the success of this 'standardized individuality' in mind. More and more libraries are equipped with lounges, sofas and arm chairs and some of these new areas look like copies of a *Starbuck's* branch. I think, this is an important development in the interior design of libraries and I don't want to miss these new lounge areas. But we have to clearly define where these ideas come from and what our philosophy is, when we are using these concepts. Like museums, libraries have to discuss how much "postmodern infiltration" (Kirchberg 2005, p. 368) is good for them.

For cultural institutions there will always be a risk of becoming confusable with the commercial sector. This process of copying business models and structures of successful competitors is called "mimetic isomorphism" in organizational theory. (Haveman 1993) Companies like *Mc Donald's* are using the four pillars of *McDonaldization* as instruments to sell their products and to expand worldwide. Libraries have a stronger local significance. As I mentioned above, they need to be identified as a part of the local network. On the other hand, there are certain popular ideas about how a library should work and look like which are important for the acceptance of a library space. People don't want 'informational fast food' but a certain atmosphere in 'their' library. Reliability and seriousness are important for the

encouragement of people and the trustworthy representation of civil rights. This does not mean building monumental landmarks of democracy and freedom of information, making individuals feel insignificant. It is helpful to have a look on the findings of museum studies concerning social change but it becomes obvious that the institutional cultures and demands of both institutions are diverging.

4 Building Space for informational participation

A further discussion about the correlation of informational participation and *McDonaldization* could be very useful. But in my last paragraph I would like to concentrate on the meaning of both concepts for the design of library space. The idea of space as a solely abstract concept in the 1980s and 1990s led to the projection of a disintegrating physical space. (see Ecarus/Löw 1997, p. 7) The mentioned renaissance of space took place in education science as well. Images of space are seen as constitutional for the social character of the individual. I propose that space is as important for the development of informational competence as it is for socialisation; independently from individual age. Informational participation is strongly connected to the spacial environment it takes place. I would like to show the importance of space for the mentioned strategies of informational participation before I make some concluding remarks about libraries as places for society.

4.1 Informational participation in bricks and mortar

"While students are intensely engaged in using new technologies, they also want enjoy the library as a contemplative oasis. Interestingly, a significant majority of students still considers the traditional reading-room their favourite area of the library – the great, vaulted, light filled space, whose walls are lined with books they may never pull off the shelf." (Freeman 2005, p.6)

This paper is not about the popularity of reading rooms, but Freeman's accidentally observation occurred in a study about the relevance of library buildings in contemporary universities. The described phenomenon reflects a desire for physical spaces. The more social changes are accelerating the more people need reliable, physical spaces. Schroer calls them "Kontingenzbewältiger" (agents of contingency management). (Schroer 2006, p.13) Change management is an important motivation for informational participation, too. But how can buildings help to implement the strategies for informational participation?

4.1.1 Freedom of information and library design

Is it possible to design spaces for freedom of information? The French architect Etienne-Louis Boullée, one of the most visionary architects of the enlightenment, drew a sketch for the projected *Bibliothèque du Roi* in Paris. He imagined an amphitheatre with galleries for 300,000 books in open shelves. The arena in the centre of this concept is a huge space for discussion and debate. Discourse was the crucial concept of political and scientific liberty during the enlightenment. Uncensored information should have been transformed into new ideas and extended knowledge by the open exchange of arguments. 250 years later, the freedom of information and speech still needs such open arenas to stay alive. Certainly, new library buildings have to have another character than Boullée's monument of enlightenment. They have to serve an open, cultural diverse and flexible society. Human proportions, understandable layouts, and appealing materials are important for the openness of the architecture.

4.1.2 Open access

Access is basically a spacial metaphor. As I mentioned above, open access does concern the physical space of a library as well as the virtual space. Open access means barrier-free and easy access to information regardless of its medium. And open access begins on the user's way to the library. Is the library easy to find or hidden, has it an inviting entrance area and who welcomes people at the gate? Is it a uniformed, businesslike watchman or a friendly, open minded librarian?

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

4.1.3 Encouragement

The easiest way to encourage people to leave their comfort zones is to create comfortable zones for them. They ought to feel at ease choosing between different kinds of working places as well as recreation areas. A good guidance inside the building must help people to overcome their fear of being helpless and lost in a new surrounding. But encouragement does not mean to regulate and control everything in the library. People need challenges, areas they can explore and customise. And they have to be real. The subtle control via simulated experiences is a phenomenon of *McDonaldization*. Informational participation is about helping people to help themselves. To reach this goal, libraries must find the right balance of support and freedom of movement.

4.1.4 Networking

Networking does not only refer to social networks based on digital technology. Libraries have to become low-intensive meeting places as described by Ragnar Audunson (2005, p.434).

"In today's society, such meeting-places with a potential of making us visible to one another across social, ethnic, generational and value-based boundaries are extremely important."

In such places individuals get the opportunity to network with other people. Unlike high-intensive meeting places, low-intensive meeting places are not defined by common social backgrounds or shared interests of the individuals using them. Informational participation means to collect and share information concerning the local community as well. The design and layout of a building has to offer areas, where such informal communication possibly can take place.

4.1.5 Conservation and activation of cultural heritage

Not only cursory social contacts are important for the identification with a cultural institution but also the feeling of stability and identity it offers. Kirchberg (2005) mentions stable everyday live models as a special demand from cultural institutions. People like the vaulted reading rooms whose walls are lined with books, because these spaces give them the feeling to stand in a long cultural tradition. They work like the background image of the *Wikipedia*, using a book to evoke reliability. But the reading rooms are not virtual space, using signs and images, they are authentic places.

I mentioned the problem of libraries who represent themselves as museums of *Gutenberg Galaxy* (or monasterial live and knowledge). These institutions are running into the unseen danger of deadness instead of stability. To stay alive, historic libraries have to activate their heritage by contemporary presentation, to guarantee accessibility of their holdings by

digitalisation and proper indexing and they have to open their historical buildings by sensitive modernisation.

4.2 Library facilities for everyone?

"[...] if it is considered what an important part a library plays among our modern educational institutions, it seems highly proper that it should receive due attention with regard to its attractions, its comforts its proper equipment, as well as opportunity for its increase and enlargement. It cannot be doubted that a good library bears a close and influential relation to the education of the community." (Breisch 1997, pp. 28-29)

The strong emphasise on architecture brings the critics on the scene who claim the content as more important as the shell. But the layout and design of a building is more than only a nice cover for the books or a postmodern façade for meaningless physical spaces. The source Breisch cites in his publication about the architect Henry Hobson Richardson is more than 130 years old but still up to date. During industrialisation libraries played an important role for the education of individuals and the democratisation of the society. They became public places and important informational and cultural resources of their communities.

Today libraries are expanding into the internet offering new services and virtual spaces for their users. But the internet does not exist outside the social reality of the people. It is not 'social' by itself, but reflects the horizon and possibilities of its users. And not everyone uses the internet. Is everyone free to use the services of a library? Actually there are social, economic, cultural and educational barriers for people, hindering them from using the library. Sometimes they are created by the library itself, sometimes there are other reasons for the non-users. The contemporary precondition for social participation is informational participation. Open and Attractive spaces with open and presuppositionless access are needed to encourage individuals to take their chance of becoming part of knowledge society. Architecture alone is not the key to success on this way, but without proper layout, equipment and design, it will be difficult to reach the goal.

But we have to be honest in the discussion about the role of the library. Libraries will never reach any individual or group of the society and they are not supposed to be responsible for social equity or social welfare. They have an important cultural and educational function, they are about to discuss against the background of social change. It is a question of political decision and professional ethics whom we address with our services and facilities.

Conclusions

The renaissance of space in sociology as well as in library and information science is based on the insight, that acceleration, globalisation and digitalisation are not liquidating space. On the contrary stability and physical contacts become more important for individuals and communities. Even in the knowledge society, social participation requires common physical spaces. But participation needs to be reworded. Information is much more important than it has been before. Therefore individuals need to be enabled to identify their information needs, to find the proper information and to transform it into individual or collaborative knowledge. Libraries and other educational and cultural institutions have to stay abreast of changes in their strategies and facilities.

As can be shown, museum studies for example can deliver important inspirations for the theoretical reflection and backing of the necessary change management. Critical analyses of processes like the *McDonaldization* can be helpful to find new ways of management and

establishment. Facing the challenges of knowledge society should not mean uncritical adoption of commercial strategies. Institutions for society like libraries have to find their own answers.

It is possible to take into consideration strategies of informational participation when building or refurbishing library facilities. Communication, access, orientation and freedom of movement are the particular requirements of those new spaces. But the building envelope is only a concept. Social space in the true sense of the word occurs when people interact. Like sociology (Schroer 2006, p.12), library and information science has to analyse how space is actually being constituted, when space becomes essential and what consequences the consideration of space in theory brings about.

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