THE SLOVENIAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES FOR THE FUTURE

The Slovenian Public Libraries
Development Strategy
2013–2020

**The Present Condition
and Environments**
of the Slovenian Public
Libraries in 2012

ZDRUŽENJE SPLOŠNIH
KNJIŽNIC

The Slovenian Public Libraries
Development Strategy 2013–2020

There are two starting points for the preparation of the document **The Slovenian Public Libraries Development Strategy 2013–2020:** one is the need for adaptation of libraries to new social environment, and second is to ensure management and control of change whilst meeting the educational, cultural and social needs of all public library users in the Republic of Slovenia. The public libraries development strategy follows the guidelines and aims introduced in a wide range of policy and strategic documents of the Republic of Slovenia. They all provide objectives, strategies and activities which include public libraries as key players for the provision of services for different target user groups.

In the period 2013–2020, the public libraries development strategy will be the basis for drafting various development and implementation documents for individual areas and specific activities quoted in the strategy.

The Strategy 2013–2020 is based on **The Starting-points for the Development of the Public Libraries Strategy for the period 2013–2020,** which deals with the position of public libraries in different social and technological environments in the country, and with their vision and mission. It includes a list of European Union documents and some other policies and public library strategies, and it also defines the purpose of the public libraries development strategy. The text includes a comprehensive list of references and resources providing the groundwork for shaping this strategic document.

During the strategy development process, an exhaustive research was made and the analysis entitled **The survey among the members, users and non-**
users of public libraries in Slovenia (2011) is available together with the two above mentioned documents on the Slovenian Public Libraries Association website:

http://zdruzenje-knjiznic.si/dobro-je-vedeti/dokumenti/ .

The purpose of the strategy

The Slovenian Public Libraries Development Strategy defines the direction and focus of public libraries in the changing environment of a modern society **based upon identification of social changes and problems, the current position of public libraries, their role and development in the country, and people's perceptions of public libraries**.

The public libraries development strategy provides answers **to librarians** – in which direction to develop the services; **to citizens** – which needs can be met in the library and what personal benefits they can expect; **to politicians** – to which areas of the national development strategy the libraries and their services can deliver support; **to current and potential providers of funds** – what can be the impact of the investments in public libraries activities; **to partners** – in which areas they can cooperate with public libraries.

The Slovenian public libraries after the year 2000

❶. The Librarianship Act 2001 and the needs for changes

Libraries are institutions with a more than 100-year tradition and one of the oldest service activities in the fields of culture, education and science. The Slovenian libraries have gradually developed a system which is comparable to those in other countries. In the 80's of the last century, all types of libraries have been linked by the Librarianship Act for the first time. They have been joined in one library and information system. It is based on the national library (according with its parent function it carries out special advocacy, educational and development tasks for the libraries' professional development) and municipality libraries. The liaison is founded on uniform professional standards for library organization, on rules and recommendations for carrying out the processes and services, and on coordinated network development. Today's public library service which is supported by the national shared bibliographic system – Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services (COBISS) is a further step forward.

The provisions of **the Librarianship Act**, which came into force in **2001**, preserved the uniformity of library activities. The Act defines the public library service which is carried out by libraries, including the national, public, school, higher education and special libraries, and the library and information service which takes care of the operation of the national shared bibliographic system.

Since the adoption of the Librarianship Act, the Slovenian public libraries have made significant progress. Besides the definition of the public service, the Act also sets out the conditions that must be met by the libraries offering public library service. It provides for a comprehensive set of mechanisms in order to maintain permanent and equal growth of the system, and its adjustment to social changes. The legislator tried to establish incentives for system development within an optimal framework. Thus, the Act provides for the development of standards and related recommendations for regulating strategic directions and norms for the operation of all types of libraries. The following bylaws have been adopted: **Rules on conditions for providing library services as public service,** which defines

the minimum conditions for carrying out library activities or public library service respectively, **Rules on library database, Order on core library services, and Rules on regional libraries.**

The Act also lays down certain duties for public libraries within the framework of public service:

- Libraries are identified as **institutions of lifelong learning**, and thus, they greatly stand out from the main concept of culture, and enter into many other fields, including lifelong learning.

- The second important field of their activities, which also classifies them as educational institutions, **is collecting and distributing historical and modern documents of the local community life – local studies**. By the adoption of the Act, the local studies have become an activity which must be developed in every public library, and it must come closer to each user. Thus, public libraries also enter the field of cultural heritage.

- By providing **free access to electronic resources of public authorities,** the libraries have gained an important function in democratization of society as they also offer help to those who are not computer qualified, or do not have appropriate equipment. Thus, they ensure better information for citizens on their rights and duties.

- Also various activities in the fields of **bibliopedagogy** and **adult education** offered to different groups of users, including those with special needs, are specified in the Act as public service. For public libraries, these activities are very important elements of operation. In the end, they also support the activation of library collections to promote understanding and development of reading culture and information literacy.

By establishing **regional public libraries**, which have been introduced by the Librarianship Act, it is possible now to better monitor public library service provision in the regions. In the last years, their co-ordinating role has been mainly directed into planning digitization projects and

contributing digital »stories« to the common portal Kamra, providing joint continuing professional development and workplace learning, exchanging good practice, and collaborating in the process automation, and acquisition of computer and communication equipment. They provide joint access to electronic databases in their regions, and offer favourable conditions for their use. An overview of their performance of special tasks also shows some problems that demand additional consideration on the functions of regionalism, as follows: regional public libraries' activities have not reduced the differences in the development among library areas that have been noticed for decades; regional public libraries and other libraries in the involved areas are still not linked enough; carrying out the tasks of regionalism stays dispersed; a role of the co-ordinator of regional libraries at the National and University Library is limited to counselling as there are not enough tools to oversee the implementation of agreed aims.

In the last decade, which coincides with the anniversary of the Act 2001, it is also concluded that the Slovenian public libraries have most obviously developed in the field of information technology and user services, and modernization of their facilities.

The legislation offered to providers of funds a good basis for a better understanding of library activities and their significance, and the content that needs to be provided. The Slovenian public libraries recognize their role of information centres and the third place of local community. According to available resources, they gradually pursue this leadership role.

However, the Act has not fulfilled all expectations in the practice of librarianship: it has not enabled consolidated library system, as the mechanisms, which should provide the uniform system operation for its coordinated development and efficient distribution of and access to information, have not been fully implemented.

As specified in the Act, the state government provides funds for certain public library functions; due to uneven development of local communities, and consequently, different capabilities to facilitate library development, the state funds should be used to achieve the standardized extent of activities.

However, the exact amount of funds is not specified. Therefore, the funding was unequal from the local communities and from the state, and in the practice, this results in uneven library development.

In the last decade, the development has brought many changes that have to be followed by public libraries as well. At first, the existing Act has enabled and encouraged such development; however, today it restricts it in some ways. So, the achieved results should serve as the foundation for further development, and regarding the changes in the profession and society, it is considered sensible to prepare a new legislative proposal aimed at:

- defining public libraries also as local centres for lifelong learning and informal individual education;

- preparing a new explanation of core library services in public service; to determine the contents and the range of activities funded by local authorities and the state;

- defining the duties of local authorities to establish public libraries, or identifying the core library network within which the local authority will be obliged to establish a public library;

- outlining detailed arrangements for the asset management when public service is delivered by contract providers;

- defining more precisely the types and scope of library expenditures which would present the grounds for defining the scope of annual budget for public library services, the provision of which has to be facilitated by local authorities;

- enabling the conditions for the development of a uniform platform for eBook lending

by all public libraries in the network, and to address the issues of appropriate business model and public lending right;

- highlighting the role of public libraries as agents for supporting the active citizenship.

❷. Public libraries' image in the public – a survey of public library members, users and non-users (2011)

In Slovenia, a review and assessment of public library services is based to a great extent on the statistical data and analyses that show the level of compliance with legally defined objectives, tasks and national standards. The efficiency and effectiveness of library operations, economic performances and benefits for the citizens, satisfaction with the offer from the viewpoint of service users, and public expectations and wishes are usually not measured, or they are limited to individual libraries or specific subjects.

For the purpose of developing the Public Libraries Development Strategy, a survey on the public libraries' image and service evaluation was carried out among the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia (2011). The findings showed:

- high degree of respondents' agreement on the benefits brought by public libraries to the wider community (they help to raise the quality of life and connect people in the community, enable quiet relaxation and active spending of leisure time, etc.) and benefits for their own lives (they provide personal cultural development, offer help by formal education, enable access to useful information for everyday life, etc.);

- high degree of satisfaction with public libraries in their communities and the work of librarians and

- the opinion of the majority of respondents (94 %) that public libraries should be publicly funded in the future as well.

During the Strategy preparation process, 24, 6 % of citizens were members of the Slovenian public libraries on average. The survey showed that public libraries are frequently visited and their services are used by many more citizens, however, they are not registered as members. 54 % of respondents, who are not registered in any public library, use library services through others.

Then, the survey results show that there is overwhelming public support for public libraries in Slovenia. However, the image of the library is still more or less connected with a book. More than 50 % of members and users know and use just the traditional public library services, including borrowing fiction and non-fiction, and provision of information on desired books and other material by librarians. Less than 50 % of respondents are aware of other services, like borrowing film and music CDs and DVDs, access to the internet and e-mail, and access to COBISS/OPAC. They do not know other services to a greater extent, or if they do, they do not use them. This shows the difference between the real identity of the public library that offers much more today, and the external image among various stakeholders in the public, who still see the public library mainly as an institution just for borrowing books. In the survey, the respondents ranked the provision of electronic and talking books as the least important. This is quite contradictory to expectations, endeavours and the future guidelines for library provision that should follow the development of the global information society.

According to the survey results, the Slovenian public does not recognize enough the role of the modern public library and does not link it with technological changes in the contemporary society. This indicates the need for a better and more visible communication with different stakeholders (users, providers of funds, business partners, civil society, public media, etc.), which will be based on approximation of the real identity of public libraries and their general public image.

Public libraries and development trends

❶. The changing place of libraries in the society

The Slovenian libraries have very successfully survived major social and historical changes, and all the time, they preserved their cultural, informational, educational and social roles. With fast adjustment, and openness and cooperation, they have efficiently fulfilled their mission. Nowadays, they have to adapt to the changes in the global society as the demographic picture is changing. People migrate in search for better life prospects and working conditions and there are more and more older people because the life expectancy is longer.

With the information revolution and the rapid development of information technology, libraries have serious competition of other information suppliers for the first time. The latter are far more responsive to the needs and requests of users using many advantages of the new technologies.

The wide use of the internet is the key to social changes, mass digitization is on the move, people are becoming active co-creators of social happening, and lifelong learning and innovation are encouraged. Libraries are developed as physical and virtual places with a global reach, however, they also show a strong interest for local events and social inclusion of different groups of citizens, and as such define themselves as the third place. All these changes influence the public library operation, and so, libraries must be committed to involving service users as equal partners in shaping the services they use.

During a long-lasting period, the general recession reflects in a decrease of funds for the operation of public libraries, and stimulates economic and rational investment in and use of different resources at all levels. Can public libraries use the social changes and economic limitations as an opportunity rather than a treat for their activities? In the changed conditions, library activities will be adapted to the needs of the external and internal environment, and their relationship and the responsibility towards the users, founders, partners, competitors and the society in general will be redefined.

❷. Library and library services user

Libraries are trustworthy and safe public spaces that symbolize order and stability. They have always built dynamic, personal and long lasting relationships with their users. However, due to the changes in the society, also the traditional relationship between the librarian, the user and the content has changed.

Modern information seekers are more and more independent, and they can find more and more information without the help of librarians. They act autonomously, their search environment is the World Wide Web and their preferred search tool is Google. There are 80 % of people who first use the web search engines, and only 11 % who first use the library catalogues❶. A web search is simple and efficient – it can be done anywhere and anytime, the results are there immediately. On the web, users cross the borders between work, study and leisure time. They are a part of the virtual community with which they constantly communicate, create common content and their own virtual environment. A wide range of different information suppliers allow people to choose which one to use. Thus, the physical library foundations have been shaken by the emergence of eBooks and other information resources.

What is the role and significance of public libraries in this world of unlimited information?

The survey on the public library's image and evaluation of their services among the citizens of Slovenia (2011) showed that there is a difference between the knowledge about the library services and their actual use. As it was already mentioned, more than a half of the members and users know and use just the most traditional public library services, whereas other services

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❶ Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources: A Report to the OCLC Membership (2005). Pridobljeno 07. 12. 2012 s spletne strani: http://www.oclc.org/reports/2005perceptions.htm

directed towards the wider information society, they know, more or less, but they use them much less frequently.

Libraries' focus must be shifted from information provision to counselling in acquisition and evaluation of information, and towards more intensive information literacy support of their users. Therefore, libraries should design such services that will be relevant to all citizens in order to have the citizens use also the non-traditional public library services.

The modern and user-oriented public library is designed as **a place of inspiration** (reading, contemplation, different media, personal creativity, play), as **a place of learning** (informal education, casual learning, individual learning, counselling, help, information about the access to knowledge) and as **a place of meeting and socializing** (public debates, lectures, panel discussions, workshops, exhibitions, concerts).

There are many public libraries' strengths which define libraries as the third places in their environments; therefore, they can pursue their role in today's society on this basis. They are:

- trustworthy institutions with a long tradition and people support them;

- still known for their reliability by retrieving and selecting information;

- a place of meeting, the centre of the local community, especially in smaller environments;

- supporting and encouraging equality for all in their communities;

- encouraging personal development by supporting all types of learning, literacy, spending quality leisure time and social activities;

- a counterpoise to the global world by highlighting local content;

- a public service and as such, a category of social state.

❸. The form of the document – strategic priorities, objectives and actions

The Slovenian public library strategy sets out FOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES on which the Slovenian public libraries should focus their development potentials in the next years. For each strategic priority, there are basic strategic development objectives including individual actions that lead to adaptation to changes in the society, and towards consolidation of the modern public library as information and educational centre and the public service in the local community.

The key strategic priorities are:

- **organization, operation and the public library network ,**

- **public library services,**

- **competence and knowledge of librarians,**

- **library as an active partner within society.**

Public libraries and development trends

Many of the specific objectives or actions planned in the document deal with the content that is already being considered by the Slovenian public libraries according to the changes in the society. Therefore, the libraries have designed some joint starting points and strategic directions or guidelines, they strive for their implementation and in some cases, they have already implemented them. However, the development, planning and implementation of some contents are still unplanned and left to individual libraries due to the fast development and demands of the society. Until now, there have not been any joint strategic directions developed at the level of all Slovenian public libraries yet.

Nowadays, changes in society also demand changes in the public library operation:

- to shape services tailored to the community and different groups of citizens, considering their needs and wishes,

- to connect libraries and to create standardized services,

- to develop new services in the direction of their mission and vision and in accordance with the wider social interests and the society development.

Strategic priorities, objectives and actions in this strategy should lead the public libraries to plan and implement a range of activities for their future development. The consent of the library profession and the providers of funds will be needed for the harmonization, organization and implementation of these activities.

Strategic Priority ①

Strategic Priority ①
Organization, operation and the public library network

Description of the strategic priority:

Rapid changes are characteristic of the modern information society, and they are reflected in the changed ways of thinking, working and communicating, and in different people's behaviour. This also demands changes in the public library operation. In the communities where they operate, new competitors are emerging, and at the same time, economic limitations and social changes strengthen demands of the providers of funds for a more and more rational spending of public funds for achieving social goals. Under these conditions, public libraries can only react with the efficient implementation of their mission and public service underpinned by stable funding, and by the development of a rational network.

OBJECTIVE ①:
EFFICIENT PUBLIC LIBRARY OPERATION AND PROVISION OF STABLE FUNDING OF COMPULSORY PUBLIC SERVICE BY LOCAL ATHORITIES AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Description of the objective:

Modernization of public libraries business model includes planning of organization based on the research and environmental analysis, strategies, clear and measurable goals, efficiency and effectiveness in terms of good management practice and rational resource allocation, and impact assessment and outcomes measurement.

The Slovenian public libraries continually and systematically collect, process and analyse a lot of data and information which are used to monitor their management. However, this is not enough for efficient planning of library services. Through different researches of environment and library stakeholders, it is also necessary to acquire, process and analyse data and information from external sources. The combination of both can serve as an efficient tool for planning and performance measurement. At the same time, this can also be the framework for argument-based proof procedures of the significance, benefits and impacts of libraries on the environment for providers of funds.

With the new definition of core services and conditions for their implementation, and with the establishment of a uniform system for the presentation of costs to the providers of funds, libraries will achieve the uniform and comparable development of core library activities.

Actions:

① . To conduct research and analyses at the national level and the level of the regional libraries, and to develop professional recommendations or guidelines for more efficient public library operation.

② . To measure and assess the public libraries' performance on the basis of the nationally accepted methodology.

③ . To encourage active participation of different professional associations in the establishment and implementation of efficient library operation.

④ . To re-define the core public library services and the conditions for their implementation; to establish a uniform system of costs for core library services.

Strategic Priority ❶

Strategic priorities, objectives and actions

❺. To present systematically the value of cultural, economic and social benefits and impact of public libraries on their environment.

OBJECTIVE ❷:
STABLE, EFFICIENT AND RATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF PUBLIC LIBRARY NETWORK

Description of the objective:

Library network functioning should enable all citizens to use and access the public library service without any limitations, differentiation or unfair treatment.

The Librarianship Act (2001) stipulates that municipalities are obliged to provide library services. Every municipality has to found a public library itself or together with other municipalities, or it can entrust the implementation of these activities by contract to another public library in agreement with its founders (Article 20). These provisions have ensured quite a good condition of the library network that should be preserved. However, in order to provide further development, the legislation should be supplemented by additional measures that would define the basic library network, including at least some local communities where the foundation of a public library would be compulsory.

Qualitative and stable library network provides equal access to public library service for all citizens. At the same time, this is the condition for the efficient and rational library operation. Namely, some tasks can be implemented at the level of the entire library network in regions, and the others only at the level of the regional libraries and competence centres. The establishment of some shared back-office services can result in better quality services due to the specialization in specific professional fields.

To ensure a more even library service development in Slovenia, the Slovenian public libraries should be provided with a uniform direction of the library system development facilitated by a special professional institution. It would create, disseminate and reinforce the professional solutions; provide uniform answers to users' needs; develop technologies and services; provide professional information and data to the public; and link programmes and projects at the national level. The tasks and operation of a special professional institution responsible for the public libraries' development should be reconsidered.

Actions:

❶. To draft legislative proposals for library network development and funding.

❷. Partnership between libraries:
  a. To redefine the organization and implementation of specific functions of the regional libraries.
  b. To introduce joint professional and development solutions.
  c. To rationalize public library operation, including collaboration in the acquisition, cataloguing and processing of library stock, digital repository, formation of counselling office for legal and other issues, development of professional recommendations and guidelines for the implementation of specific services carried out by more libraries, etc.

❸. To re-define the professional institution for the uniform monitoring and guiding development of the public library system.

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Strategic Priority ❷

Strategic Priority ❷
Public library services

Description of the strategic priority:

The changes in the way of living in Slovenia dictate the need to reconsider library services, and how libraries can contribute to citizens' well-being in the changed circumstances, and provide support and facilitate conditions for their personal development and active citizenship.

The offer of information in the World Wide Web grows every day, public and private organizations develop services in the virtual environment, social stratification is increasing, people are changing their living environment more often than in the past as they face life challenges, or from economic reasons. For many, spare time is a rare commodity that is hard to gain. However, there are also many people who have a lot of unfulfilled time.

Although the survey among the members, users and non-users of public libraries in Slovenia showed that borrowing books is still the most popular and the most frequently used public library service, it is expected that the proportion of information gained by users from the internet instead of the library physical material will increase, and that people without any skills for assessing and efficiently using information offered in the virtual environment will be in a worse and worse position. Namely, one needs the necessary knowledge and skills or the so-called information literacy and the competence of change management. The mix of cultural patterns brought by the modern migration processes can also be a source of potential conflicts, or an opportunity for the cultural enrichment and broadening horizons.

All these and other fields are opportunities for libraries to react in an innovative way to the demands and expectations of the community, and to modernize and upgrade the existing services and to create new ones. Both should be carried out at the highest quality level and by using advanced technology. Thus, libraries will keep permanently their important role and their place in the everyday citizens' lives.

OBJECTIVE ❶:
UPGRADE THE EXISTING SERVICES AND CREATE NEW ONES

Description of the objective:

In the past years, the Slovenian public libraries have developed a range of services to meet the specific needs of different target groups. They are successful at reading encouragement and children's creativity development, and they pay more and more attention to the needs of vulnerable groups of citizens, the unemployed and older citizens. They are trying to find the way to those who are, from different reasons, unable to use library services in the normal way. Library facilities have improved considerably, and this opens new opportunities for libraries to fully develop their role of a physical and spiritual place for: meeting people, gaining knowledge and sharing ideas; strengthening human contacts and individual personal growth; openness to cultural diversity; and creative integration of the past with the present.

The survey among the members, users and non-users of libraries showed a great interest for valuable information on local studies and cultural heritage. This is a new challenge for libraries to make the local studies collection more accessible for people in the digital environment, and to look for new forms of dissemination and interpretation of these materials by using advanced technology.

Strategic Priority **2**

In the future, public libraries will upgrade the existing services by a systematic approach towards the development of different views on information and functional literacy. They will also deliver services in the virtual environment whenever this is considered to be reasonable and necessary.

Actions:

1. To establish a physical place of the library as the third place, and this should become by itself a library service for all generations.

2. To design services for encouragement of multiculturalism in public libraries.

3. To develop effective ways of dissemination of information and documents on local studies and cultural heritage via digitization.

4. To offer new services in the fields of information literacy, lifelong learning, social inclusion, and arts and culture.

5. To build innovative services that will improve retrieval, acquisition and use of knowledge provided by innovative, interactive technologies.

OBJECTIVE 2:
INCREASE OF USE OF A RANGE OF LIBRARY SERVICES

Description of the objective:

Although public libraries have not been only borrowing books for a long time, the public has still not recognized the broader diversity of their services, and this is the reason why their services are not used by all citizens who can benefit from them.

For the services to reach the maximum effect, libraries need to fulfil their mission through guidance and counselling, and awakening users' potentials. At the same time, they should respond to users' actual, established and verified, needs. They should also involve users in service development followed by an efficient and targeted promotion.

The survey among the members, users and non-users of public libraries (2011) also showed that there are groups of citizens who use library services much less frequently or not at all, because they buy their own books, they are satisfied with the freely available information accessible on the internet, or because of lack of time, they use library services through others. Libraries could approach these potential users by offering them some new or higher standard chargeable services.

Actions:

1. Excellent, efficient and targeted promotion of products and services.

2. Involvement of users and other library stakeholders in the planning and development of services.

3. Development and offering of above standard services as an upgrade of public service.

Strategic Priority ❸:
Competence and knowledge of librarians

Description of the strategic priority:

Besides the knowledge of library and information science, librarians also need other knowledge for their quality work, so that they will be able to answer to the constant changes in the society (e. g. pedagogical and andragogical knowledge, psychology, information technology, project management, etc.).

Today, library employees mostly gain their knowledge coincidentally, depending on the offer on the market, available funds in each library and potential recommendations by colleagues. Due to the necessity to provide planned and targeted education programmes, a systematic approach towards staff training and professional development is needed. Therefore, a position should be appointed officially to provide leadership and coordination of educational activities.

An important element for a better public library operation is also a higher level of formal education of staff.

As the amounts allocated for the investment into education are quite high, libraries should constantly measure and assess its effectiveness.

OBJECTIVE ❶:
PROFESSIONALLY QUALIFIED AND COMPETENT STAFF IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

Description of the objective:

In order to provide continuing education in public libraries, a model of staff training and professional development should be established. This should fill the gap in knowledge between the formal education and practical experience. Continuing education and professional development ensure that each employee and the library operate efficiently in a changing environment.

Because skills in librarianship are transferable, an important part of the continuing professional development and workplace learning is exchange of knowledge and best practices among staff.

Actions:

❶. Establish an institution that will coordinate and organise educational activities to respond to the needs of public libraries. It will aim to:
   a. prepare and constantly update a set of recommended skills and knowledge for librarians and middle management;
   b. develop, update and maintain a set of educational content related to skills and knowledge needed in libraries and available in the market;
   c. shape the missing educational programmes;
   d. encourage the use of modern teaching methods (e-learning, remote access, etc.).

Strategic Priority ❸

❷. Continuing education should be included at least as a performance indicator in all strategic documents of every library.

❸. Develop a more efficient system of continuing education for library staff as a part of their career plans.

OBJECTIVE ❷:
STRATEGIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT IN A TIME OF CHANGE

Description of the objective:

The management and administration of public libraries are key elements for an effective (to do the right things) and efficient (to do it in the right manner) operation, and promotion of the value of public libraries in the modern society. The strategy suggests that in the following years, this should also lead towards a more organized approach for acquiring and developing knowledge from the field of management and leadership: research of internal and external library environment, strategic planning and goal setting, human resources management, financial management, investment and marketing management, implementation, monitoring and measuring the services, evaluation of results, change management, etc.

Actions:

❶. To provide a system of training and professional development for directors and middle management of public libraries.

OBJECTIVE ❸:
KNOWLEDGE FLOW

Description of the objective:

At their work, librarians use and additionally gain, both formally and informally, many skills and experience, which should be transferred among them. Libraries should develop internal culture which will encourage the exchange of knowledge and experience through teamwork.

The diversity of library services demands from librarians a wide range of knowledge and skills which they can gain by cooperation and sharing of experience among themselves, and also with other institutions.

The implementation of joint projects in partnership with different institutions is a very valuable way of exchange of knowledge and experience.

Actions:

❶. To upgrade the educational role of regional libraries for the libraries in the region.

❷. To facilitate exchange of knowledge and best practices between the institutions in the local, national and international environments.

Strategic Priority ④:
Library as an active partner within society

Description of the strategic priority:

As non-profit institutions operating in the public sector, public libraries respond to and influence today's social environment. To achieve their mission, they should know their communities and they should actively participate in them, whilst at the same time, they should develop their identity and enhance their visibility. Thus, the library will become an important building block in the local community.

OBJECTIVE ❶:
STRENGTHEN THE EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS AND ESTABLISH NEW ONES

Description of the objective:

Public libraries work in partnerships with all types of libraries and other institutions as co-operation provides better results. They also collaborate to improve their involvement in local, national and international projects. By constant exchange of information and initiatives for partner cooperation, they will be more efficient by making joint applications for projects.

Libraries act harmoniously towards the national library and the national shared bibliographic system, and thus, actively cooperate in the network development.

They also establish partnerships within the special fields of business and civil society.

Actions:

❶. Public libraries should embed development-oriented partnerships in their strategic documents.

❷. Public libraries should take over the initiative for professional and organizational cooperation of different types of libraries in the local communities.

❸. Public libraries should become the initiators of partnerships among different institutions at local, national and/or international level.

OBJECTIVE ❷:
ENCOURAGE WIDESPREAD UNDERSTANDING OF THE VALUE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Description of the objective:

According to the survey among the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia (2011), public libraries are not very well recognized in the public, and they are not acknowledged as physical and virtual places offering learning space, events and meeting places, as buildings of presence and inspiration in local communities, as local community information centres, or as third places providing a space to meet and socialize, and fostering social networking activities and democratic cooperation. This public image does not match the real identity of public libraries, therefore, in the future, they must direct their efforts into an organized process of changing the public library image towards different stakeholders in the public. In this, different target groups (users, potential users, providers of funds, media, business sector, politicians, wider professional public, etc.) should be addressed by different strategic approaches.

Strategic Priority ❹

Actions:

❶. To include a variety of promotional activities in the libraries' strategic documents.

❷. To prepare at least one all year promotion where the public library stakeholders will cooperate: the Slovenian Public Libraries Association, the Slovenian Library Association, the Ministry of Culture, the National and University Library – Library System Development Centre.

❸. To aim to organize regular joint promotional activities at the agreed time intervals and with a common message (e. g. November 20 – The Day of the Slovenian Public Libraries, April 23 – The International Book Day, etc.).

About the document

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During the period of their existence, the Slovenian public libraries have experienced some key development cycles. The profession, which shaped them, and the society, which supported that, assess the current state of development as good. Libraries are also recognized as successful cultural institutions and the public library service is held in high esteem by the general public.

The high level of public trust in libraries is our obligation. That is why we must keep what we have achieved, and above all, develop library activities in such a way, that also in the future, in the changed social conditions, public libraries will provide support to all citizens in the fields of education, information literacy and culture.

The document The Public Libraries Development Strategy 2013–2020 indicates and opens new possibilities for public libraries operation in this period, sets the starting-points for enhancing the achieved level, and promotes cross-linking and cooperation between institutions.

Certainly, the thread of the document is the vision of public library users becoming active, informed and responsible citizens.

Shaping the document

The initiative to create The Slovenian Public Libraries Development Strategy was launched by the Slovenian Public Libraries Association and the proposal was unanimously adopted by the National Council for Librarianship at the Ministry of Culture. In the period of two years (2011 and 2012), the document was produced by a working group of the Slovenian Public Libraries Association, which

was financed by the Ministry. The draft was launched for consultation on 3 August, 2012 and lasted until 31 October, 2012.

Both documents **The Slovenian Public Libraries Development Strategy 2013–2020** and **The Starting-points for the preparation of The Slovenian Public Libraries Development Strategy** are available on the Slovenian Public Libraries Association website:

http://zdruzenje-knjiznic.si/dokumenti/Strategija-izhodisca-koncno.pdf

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Content

①. Introduction

Libraries have very successfully survived major social and historical changes, and all the time, they have preserved their cultural, informational, educational and social roles. With fast adjustment, and openness and cooperation, they have efficiently fulfilled their mission. Nowadays, they have to adapt to the changes in the global society: the demographic picture is changing, there are ever more older people because life expectancy is increasing, and people migrate more in search for better life prospects and working conditions.

With the information revolution and the rapid development of information technology, libraries have gained great opportunities to extend the reach of their activities, and to modernize their services. However, they have also gained serious competition of other information suppliers who are just as responsive to the needs and requests of users by using many advantages of the new technologies. The wide use of the internet is the key to social changes, mass digitization is on the move, people are becoming active co-creators of social happening, and lifelong learning and innovation are encouraged. Libraries are developed as physical and virtual places with a global reach, but they also show a strong interest for local events and social inclusion of different groups of citizens, and as such define themselves as the ideal third place. The information technology enables them to put users in the forefront as equal partners in shaping the services they use.

During a long-lasting period, the general recession reflects in a decrease of funds for the operation of public libraries, and stimulates economic and rational investment in and use of different resources at all levels. Can public libraries use the social changes and economic limitations as an opportunity rather than a threat for their activities? In the changed conditions, library activities will be adapted to the needs and opportunities of the external and internal environment, and their relationship and responsibility towards the users, founders, partners, competitors and the society in general will be redefined.

Libraries will follow the above mentioned changes and challenges in the society if they will:

- Successfully fulfil their mission.
- Research their local (users, providers of similar or identical services in their community) and wider (economic, technological, social, demographic, etc.) operating environment and adapt to it; then, plan on which target groups they will primarily focus, and which services will be offered to them; and understand what are their advantages, competencies and opportunities.
- Strive to support the actual needs of individual user groups according to their mission and general social interests and the progress in the world.
- Plan systematically and use rationally all the available resources.

❷. Basic starting points for a strategy

The Slovenian public libraries' strategy is derived from the three focal points of the contemporary society:

- The power of culture for development – every local community can strengthen its power through cultural offer by using the potential of cultural and creative industries. As a fast developing creative sector, culture is of great interest to economy.
- Information for innovation – innovation is a process of turning ideas into new products, processes and services, which requires knowledge and new information.
- Intercultural dialogue – the library is an important entrance point for the new community citizens with different cultural background.

The key starting point for a strategy is adaptation to: new social conditions; lifestyles and values of future generations; advanced technological challenges, including remote access, digitization and e-books; and encouragement of widespread understanding of the cultural and educational value of public libraries in local communities. All these should be implemented within a rational use of resources.

Within public service, libraries provide access to publications, services and information for all who need and wish them. It is expected that libraries are the main cultural and information centres in local communities, and that they are active creators of cultural and information literacy and promoters of lifelong learning. Additionally, they are ready to accept and manage the changes. However, additional knowledge, organizational changes, various marketing approaches and innovative services will be needed to position libraries towards other public services in local communities.

These trends should be followed by all employees. Librarians still lack knowledge and skills for providing services to today's and future users; therefore, they will be trained especially to:

- manage user relationships
- master all types of information technologies
- promote and market library services
- know »the product« (understand collections and their content, develop skills to advise users, and assess and encourage the users' needs)
- develop leadership knowledge and skills.

Linking and cooperation between public libraries should be used to find common solutions, which will lead to their steady and uniform development.

Compliance of the public libraries' development strategy with the objectives of the development policies and strategic documents of the Republic of Slovenia

In the key national development objectives for the period 2006–2013 and five development priorities for their achievement, **the Development Strategy of Slovenia** (2005) includes the following areas where public libraries can contribute significantly:

- enhancement of the quality of education and encouragement of lifelong learning
- increase of access to education and training through advanced technologies (regional/local points of lifelong learning supported by IT) (2nd development priority)
- decrease of social exclusion and social threats – equal access to the services of the systems of social security, health care, education and culture... (4th development priority)
- development of the national identity and culture (5th development priority).

The National Development Programme of the Republic of Slovenia for the period 2007–2013 (2008)
Public library services can influence greatly the implementation of the National Development Programme objectives by offering the services which enhance the quality of life in urban and rural areas.

Development Strategy for the Information Society in the Republic of Slovenia (2003) mentions libraries as important places for the delivery of education for the information society and classifies them as information centres and providers of digital content.

The National Strategic Reference Framework 2007–2013 – public library services can play an important role in achieving its objectives.

❸. The state and position of public libraries in the environment

3. 1 Organization and offer of public library service at the national level

According to the 2010 data, there are 58 independent public libraries in Slovenia. They operate in the territory of one or more municipalities and manage the network of 265 city and town libraries, 12 mobile libraries (671 stops at 589 locations in rural areas) and 73 locations of mobile collections (nursing homes and care facilities, learning disabilities care homes, maternity homes, etc.) (Slovenske knjižnice v številkah, 2011).

The Librarianship Act defines ten regional libraries which perform special tasks for a wider region: providing a more comprehensive selection of library material and information, offering professional help to all libraries in the region, co-ordinating collection, processing and storage of the local studies material, and directing weeded library material.

The public service in the field of library activities and its implementation is laid down by:

- Librarianship Act
- Legal Deposit Act
- Public Interest in Culture Act
- Provision of Funds for Certain Vital Cultural Programmes of the Republic of Slovenia Act
- Local Government Act
- Rules on Determining Common Expenses of Regional Libraries Providing Library Services in Several Municipalities, and Expenses of Local Libraries
- Order on Core Library Services
- Rules on the Conditions for Carrying out Library Activities as Public Service
- Rules on Regional Libraries
- Public Library Standards (for the period May 1, 2005 – April 30, 2015) as professional recommendations for efficient and economically sound organization of public library service to achieve social goals.

Public libraries plan, organize and implement services for different target groups. They:

- acquire, process, preserve, provide and ensure access to a wide range of library material (books, journals, magazines, newspapers, CDs, DVDs, toys, etc.),
provide loans inside and outside the library and interlibrary loan, offer reading rooms for reading and study.
- develop reading culture.
- manage and develop library resources, including library catalogues, databases, etc.
- provide support for people searching for information through library material, electronic resources in different media and the internet, and ensure access to and use of public authorities' material, which are publicly available on the web.
- make available computers which provide free public access to the internet, electronic databases, e-mail, word processors, etc.
- provide informal user education to use the library and information resources.
- develop and provide a range of activities and services for individual target groups: information literacy workshops, professional lectures in a variety of fields, assistance and counselling for job-seekers, professionally-led children's playgrounds, discussion groups, advisory services, study support and events for the youth, literary nights, fairy tale hours, exhibition guidance, etc. Thus, they create a place for further development of individual's personality, development of reading culture, lifelong learning, social gathering, relaxation, connection to the world and democratic opportunity for cooperation in different processes of human creativity. Hence, they fulfil the cultural and social roles, enable lifelong learning and encourage active leisure time through reading, listening, conversation, relaxation and pleasure.
- connect with other institutions in their community and in the wider environment (schools, galleries, museums, tourist organizations, etc.) to present a joint offer of lifelong learning programmes for library users.

They develop and provide access to library and information services for all those groups within the community who:

- for whatever reason are unable to visit the library physically: home library service, mobile library collections and other types of collaboration in hospitals, learning disabilities care homes, prisons, nursing homes and care facilities, maternity homes, drug-addicts communities, etc.
- are disadvantaged (the physically disabled, the blind and visually impaired, the deaf and hearing impaired, the elderly, etc.) to whom they adapt their offer (physical access for wheelchairs, talking books, computer equipment for visually impaired, large print books, etc.). Thus, they fulfil their social role in a democratic society.

publish a range of publications (journals, magazines, non-print material, etc.) in the area of librarianship and information science.

The Slovenian public libraries have already achieved a high level of development in accordance with the changes and needs of the society, however, this development is still unequal in some areas of Slovenia, and it depends upon:

Funding by individual municipalities, which are legally obligated to finance the public library activities in their region, but the funding is not provided everywhere as stipulated by the law, and by the Ministry of Culture, which **should** help to balance the uneven development by co-financing public library activities in certain regions.
Public library management and its ability to use public resources efficiently and effectively, to obtain alternative financing sources through local, national and international projects and to gain support of sponsors and donors; and finally, the capacity and capability of administration and governance, creativity and readiness for change.

3.2 Overview and analysis of public library operation

3.2.1 Operation, staff

Over the last decade (from 2000 to 2009), the long-term trends showed an increase in library collections, acquisitions, number of employees and the circulation, whereas the number of users remained the same. The library collections have increased for 38% (Knjižnični sistem Slovenije 2009-2010, p. 8).

In Slovenia, public libraries have, on average, five items of library material per capita. The performance indicator for the size of library collection has reached, on average, the public library standards (Slovenske splošne knjižnice: Srečevanja z znanjem in domišljijo, 2010, p. 12).

The public libraries have gradually increased the additions. In the period 2000–2009, there was an increase of 24% (Knjižnični sistem Slovenije 2009–2010, 2010, p. 8). However, they have not achieved the standard provisions regarding the additions of library material, as in 2009, libraries achieved only 88% of recommended quantity, and there is a decline of 8% over the previous year. The decrease in quantity of new purchased material is actually even higher, about 10%. We have to stress that in the structure of spending of funds for the purchase of library material, the funds allocated for the purchase of electronic resources have increased essentially – from 2,1% to 4,2% (Knjižnični sistem Slovenije 2009–2010, 2010, p. 9).

The number of borrowed library items increased for 44% (Knjižnični sistem Slovenije 2009–2010, 2010, p. 8). A library member borrowed, on average, 45,6 items of library material, including 57% of fiction and 43% of other library material (Slovenske splošne knjižnice: Srečevanja z znanjem in domišljijo, 2010, p. 18).

There is no exact data on the use of individual public library services which are specified under the Article 2 of the Librarianship Act (e. g. information literacy, user training, etc.) and Article 16 of the Librarianship Act (e. g. activities for children, youth and adults in order to develop reading culture, activities for children, youth and adults with special needs, organization of cultural events, provision of local studies material, etc.). There is only the data on the use of organized user training, i. e. 101.602 public library users attended the courses in 2010 (including 8.108 users that participated in electronic resources training), and that public libraries held 21.051 events. The number of events has increased for 20 % in the period 2007–2010. The data on the use of remote access to electronic services through the COBISS system (ordering items, loan renewals, etc.) and the use of the self-service machines is also available (Slovenske knjižnice v številkah, 2012).

The membership ratio to the population stays the same. In 2009, 24,7% of citizens were public library members (Knjižnični sistem Slovenije 2009–2010, 2010, p. 8).

There was a 33% increase in the number of staff in the period 2000–2009 (Knjižnični sistem Slovenije 2009–2010, 2010, p. 8). In spite of the overall increase, many public libraries do not achieve the minimum conditions stipulated by the Rules on the Conditions for Carrying out Library Activities as Public Service. The majority of libraries hire fewer employees as laid down by the Public Library Standards. All three categories are lacking in staff: professional, administrative and technical workers, which is reflected not only in the professional library work but also in the economy and cost-effectiveness (Analiza stanja na področju kulture s predlogi ciljev za nacionalni program za kulturo 2012–2015, 2011, p. 199).

The number of professional staff in public libraries is constantly growing but not fast enough to achieve advanced development in the public library operation. It is considered that public libraries have gained a greater amount of work and more new tasks (through the legislation) with the demands for establishing a hybrid library (Ibid, p. 198). The European and national strategies for the development of libraries into centres of local democracy and the professional recommendations and guidelines for enforcement of equality of citizens by making available quality library services have increased the scope of public library operation. They have brought many new tasks to public libraries, including the implementation of new technology and new media in the acquisition; selection and use of information and the information technology usage in citizens' everyday life (information literacy); development of their creativity by

collecting and presenting local studies material; and development of library culture as a way of solving information and educational issues for various groups of people (Ibid, p. 197). In the library sector, the electronic operation does not mean only that digital services are replacing the analogue services; on the contrary, it means a parallel operation of the traditional and digital environment. Thus, the Slovenian libraries operate as the so-called hybrid libraries providing access to and use of library holdings on the premises and also through the remote access (Ibid, p. 196).

Regional libraries

After the adoption of the Rules on Regional Libraries, ten regional libraries have signed an agreement with the Ministry of Culture, with the consent of their founders, to perform special tasks. It has been planned that the tasks will be developed gradually, in accordance with available funds. The Ministry of Culture has allocated some funds for performing special tasks in all regional libraries and for the coordination performed by the National and University Library.

The main findings and data on the condition of regional public libraries' operation are:

- In the last three years, there is some progress in the implementation of special tasks in regional libraries; however, the uniform development has not been achieved yet.
- Libraries still do not differentiate between their regular activities and the regional tasks.
- In the majority of regions, no analysis was carried out and there are no documents that would ensure the uniform implementation of tasks across Slovenia (e. g. an analysis of the condition of development and the changing needs of library services in the region, an analysis of the planning and development of library network, fundamental collection development policy documents to ensure a more comprehensive selection of library material and information, and some libraries still have not defined the essential development needs in terms of the information technology in the region).
- The tasks of the regional coordinator at the national library are limited to the coordination of counselling, leadership, motivation and assistance for the operation of regional libraries. The greatest differences among libraries occur in the implementation of the provision of professional assistance to libraries in the region. Not everyone is aware yet, that performing the tasks does not mean only occasional responding to the questions from libraries, or informing libraries about new services in the regional library. The new theoretical knowledge (professional and development research) is also of great importance. It would improve the

quality and diversity of library services, guide and promote the development of library science, and facilitate the implementation of theory into practice. The professional work means systematic and long term planning of coordinated regional library development in partnership with other libraries in the region. However, there have not been almost any joint projects in the regions, unless some exceptions.

- Rules on Regional Libraries stipulate the employment of at least three professional workers or three FTE with at least university degree. This provision has still not been achieved. The practice of special tasks' implementation reveals that the quality of performance is higher in those libraries where the post of a regional library coordinator has been included in the staffing table. Thus, the library has clearly defined the responsibility for the implementation of special tasks. In other libraries, the latter are still scattered among different professionals in libraries, yet, their coordination and implementation is guaranteed. It is the same with the recruitment of systems administrators or information specialists.
- In 2008 and 2009, libraries have received more programme funds for the employment of staff. On this basis, it was considered that they will be able to increase the implementation of special tasks or coordination and counselling in comparison with the previous years. However, this was not the case: there is still uneven development between regions, and according to the reports, it is clear that there are great differences among individual regional libraries. Therefore, the different amount of funds received for the implementation of regional tasks cannot be the real reason.
- The tasks of coordination at the national library are performed by one worker who coordinates the operation of ten regional libraries. According to the Rules on Regional Libraries (Article 19), which stipulates the employment of at least three workers in each regional library, there is no correlation between the national and regional libraries regarding the number of staff and the range of tasks.

3.2.2 Level of development and library network

The Rules on the Conditions for Carrying out Library Activities as Public Service define the minimum conditions for carrying out public service in all types of libraries, and especially for public libraries, including regional, town and mobile libraries. According to these provisions, an overview of the level of public library development (developed, medium developed, undeveloped libraries) presented the progress in town libraries, mobile collections locations, and mobile buses from 2002 to 2008, and during this period, there is a rise in the number of developed and medium developed libraries (Vodeb, 2011, p. 161–169).

A more detailed picture of the current state of development or achievement of the conditions in individual fields of the public library data collection (organization, stock, professional workers, premises and equipment) revealed a very high average value for the regional libraries and mobile buses in 2008. Additionally, it determined a very low rate of occupation of the positions for the implementation of the tasks of regionality (i. e. providing a more comprehensive selection of library material and information, offering professional help to all libraries in its region, co-ordinating collection, processing and storage of the local studies material, and directing weeded library material) in the regional libraries (47,5% fulfilment of the required conditions). The rate of the employed professional workers in the regional libraries is higher (86,8% fulfilment of the required conditions), whereas in town libraries it is again a little lower (62,7% fulfilment of the required conditions).

It is very characteristic of regional libraries that they do well in fulfilling the conditions, with the only exception being the selection of material. Town libraries as a whole do not achieve the conditions as well, especially regarding the selection of material and the number of professional workers. As a whole, the best in fulfilling conditions are mobile libraries.

The conditions related to the premises and equipment, namely, the number of computers for users and the number of desks in the reading rooms, improved the most in the period 2002–2008. The lowest growth rates were observed in this period in additions of library material and the number of professional workers.

An overview of the performance of general (specified under the Article 2 of the Librarianship Act) and special (specified under the Article 16 of the Librarianship Act) tasks in public libraries in the period 2002–2008 reveals that town libraries in general perform both types of tasks. Significant progress is most obvious in the implementation of special tasks, where libraries mostly focus on lifelong learning, access to information of a public nature, reading culture development and organization of cultural events, and less on local studies collections and users with special needs.

On the basis of the data of town libraries and mobile collections locations, it was found out that out of 210 Slovenian municipalities 56 do not have a town library, and out of 56, there are 47 also without a mobile collection location. 8,5% of the population of the Republic of Slovenia live in municipalities without a town library and 7,6% live in municipalities without even a mobile collection location. It needs to be mentioned that mobile library vehicle stops are not included in the above findings on the availability of library services in these municipalities (Knjižnični sistem Slovenije 2009–2010, 2010, p. 10).

In spite of the fact that according to the performance indicators the full picture of the level of development shows the improvement of the conditions in terms of the premises and

equipment, in practice, there are many problems connected with planning, building and furnishing libraries: locations, which are inadequate in terms of accessibility and security; addressing inadequate spatial conditions takes too long; uneconomical, often also unprofessional, physical planning (location, building/space, equipment), which is not dealt with as a whole. Library programmes lack detailed descriptions and, therefore, represent an obstacle for high-quality planning and implementation; furthermore, library programmes do not include appropriate technical specifications required for quality and safe arrangement and preservation of material; decision making on the location and the plan are done without librarians; interventions into space are done without experienced professionals, even without architects; plans for libraries are often selected without a tender; there is not enough time available for the realization of the selected plan. Not enough attention is dedicated to the quality of equipment, a final selection is made just according to the price and not the quality as well, access to and use of premises for disabled people is limited (Analiza stanja na področju kulture s predlogi ciljev za nacionalni program za kulturo 2012–2015, 2011, p. 200).

The assessed level of the public libraries' development also revealed that no town public library is listed in the first category as a developed library (Vodeb, 2011, p. 169).

On the basis of the above data, a question is raised about the methodology for verifying the achievement details for the individual indicators within each indicator group, set by the Rules on the Conditions for Carrying out Library Activities as Public Service, since this feedback might not be appropriate.

Regional libraries
The condition of the regional libraries in 2010 revealed a very uneven level of development in terms of individual performance indicators (the collection and additions, a percentage of registered citizens, loans, interlibrary loans, visits, information and communication technology equipment, income, staff and professional workers, etc.).

The analysis (Bon, 2011, p. 171–196) identified that the absolute values pointed to the highest level of development in nine public libraries in the Osrednjeslovenska region. Yet, the relative values – calculation per potential user – revealed a high level of library service development in four public libraries in the Goriška region. Likewise, this is also the Slovenian region, where children and youth achieved the best scores in reading literacy within the international research – PISA, 2009.

However, the same analysis revealed that the level of achievement of conditions in public libraries in the Spodnjepodravska, Pomurska and Štajerska regions fell below the provisions of the standard. It showed that some socio-economic factors can be compared to the level of library activities' development. The comparison between socio-economic state of statistical

regions (the level of registered unemployment, per capita gross domestic product) and achievement of standards as professional recommendations for the efficient organization of public libraries indicates that in the east of Slovenia, where the level of registered unemployment is higher, per capita gross domestic product is lower and the number of municipalities is high, there is also a larger gap between the level of achievement of library service conditions and the standard's recommendations.

The monitoring of these indicators for the second year running and comparison with the PISA 2009 assessment results increasingly confirm the view that the socio-economic state of certain statistical regions impacts the condition and development of library regions. Crucially, the report also found out that it is similar in the education area where home socio-economic background influences educational (un)success of children.

3.2.3 Services for specific user groups

The blind and visually impaired
According to rough estimates, there are supposed to be approximately 10.000 blind and visually impaired persons in Slovenia. This number does not include those people who, due to age related degenerations, cannot watch television programmes, read books printed for people with healthy eyes, etc. As the proportion of the population over 65 constantly increases, the number of blind and visually impaired persons rises as well (Vzpostavitev ustreznega statusa knjižnice za slepe in slabovidne v sistemu knjižnic, 2010, p. 5).
According to the Article 16 of the Librarianship Act (2001), public libraries »shall also provide services for groups of the population with special needs«. The study prepared by the Centre for Library System Development at the National and University Library and entitled »Establishing the adequate status of the library for the blind and visually impaired in the library system 2010 (Vzpostavitev ustreznega statusa knjižnice za slepe in slabovidne v sistemu knjižnic)« determined that public libraries have carried out many projects. Thus, they have looked for new ways to attract people living with sight-loss to public libraries by offering a variety of activities in compliance with the law and strategic directions. However, the majority of library services for the blind and visually impaired are still performed by the library of the Association for the blind and visually impaired, which has the status of a society library. Hence, it is not in the context of libraries performing library service as public service. The study presents a proposal for defining a national library for the blind as a public institution, and the manner of its integration into the public library service system.

The development of an integrated model anticipated the central/national library for the blind and visually impaired, which would be closely connected with other libraries providing public

library service. Besides performing the core library services and reproducing the material in techniques accessible to the blind and visually impaired, its basic role would be to provide encouragement, leadership, development and coordination of library activities intended for people with disabilities across Slovenia. In this system, public libraries would participate in distribution of material and as individual actors in the implementation and promotion of library services for the blind and visually impaired.

This proposal is a good challenge according to the small area of Slovenia and the absurdity of duplicating the same or similar services for the blind and visually impaired users in every single public library.
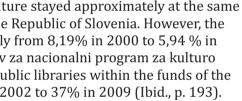
Analyses of offering the services for other specific groups of users in the Slovenian public libraries (offer for the users with special needs like deaf and hear impaired, dyslectics, people in prisons, people on medical treatment, etc.) cannot be traced.

3.2.4 Funding

In the period 2000–2009, the proportion of funds for culture stayed approximately at the same level, representing approximately 2% of the budget of the Republic of Slovenia. However, the share of funds for library activities decreased significantly from 8,19% in 2000 to 5,94 % in 2009 (Analiza stanja na področju kulture s predlogi ciljev za nacionalni program za kulturo 2012–2015, 2011, p. 184). The proportion of funds for public libraries within the funds of the Ministry of Culture for library services fell from 43 % in 2002 to 37% in 2009 (Ibid., p. 193).

The share of funds for library activities in the period 2000–2009 has decreased constantly. It was not possible to perform certain tasks defined by the law to the full extent. Likewise, it was not possible to achieve all the objectives provided by both national programmes for culture. The funds that were allocated to support further development of library activities in the budget memorandum, and later as a financial consequence of the National programme for culture, were not in the budget. Thus, further development has been paralysed and the performance of some programmes and services has been prevented, respectively. Due to contraction of programmes, it was necessary to make priorities that had to be carried out because they were the basis for efficient and effective functioning of other activities. And yet, despite curtailing their operation, libraries are still an indispensable part of infrastructure activities for social growth and development (Ibid., p. 184).

Gradual decrease of funds for public library service can threaten the performance of public interest, or even the delivery of public service. Namely, the changed social and economic

conditions, technological development, the European and national strategies and guidelines, and the special legislation have increased the range of tasks and activities. For several years now, the share of labour costs has increased in proportion to funding due to the wage reform, and it has been noticed that there has been an excessive loss of income allocated for the delivery of the programme, major maintenance and purchase of equipment (Ibid., p. 186).

In 2009, in the libraries' income structure, the share of municipalities was 80,4%, the state 9,1%, other resources 2,6% and non-public income from the performance of public service 7,8%. The ratio of funds from the registration fees and charges was 4,1%. In comparison to the previous year, the nominal value of the income of public libraries in 2009 rose by 3,1 % with the yearly rate of inflation 1,8% (data by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia). Nevertheless, the growth in 2008 was smaller compared to 2007, as the income growth was 11,3%. The funds allocated for the purchase of library material increased only by 0,3%, and the nominal value of the funds allocated for investment costs decreased by 6,1% (Knjižnični sistem Slovenije 2009-2010, p.9).

Regional libraries
The Ministry of Culture has provided funds for performing special tasks in all regional libraries and for the coordination performed by the National and University Library. Yet, until now, the finances have only been sufficient to fund a little less than one third of the range of special tasks performed in a certain year. In 2009, only part of the tasks were financed by these funds, i. e. the equivalent of employment of 1,25 to 2,00 professionals, instead of three workers per library as stipulated by the Rules on Regional Libraries.

3.2.5 Bibliographic information system

All Slovenian public libraries are members of the Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services (COBISS). Its tasks are performed by IZUM - Institute of Information Science established by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia as the information service of the Slovenian science, culture and education. Its activities are linked mainly to the development and performance of the COBISS system and services, the development of the Slovenian Current Research Information System (SICRIS system), as well as the connection between these two systems and the important international information resources, including WorldCat, Web of Science, ProQuest, etc.

More than 2.300 librarians cooperate in the COBISS.SI system, and among them, over 700 have the licence for shared cataloguing. The comparison between the number of cataloguers and the

number of created records shows an extreme dispersion in the cataloguing work. Almost half of cataloguers create less than 100 records per year. Thus, the average is mostly two records per week, which is also reflected in the quality of records.

Today, the bibliographic agencies and systems in the world are facing great challenges: update of cataloguing rules on the basis of new cataloguing principles, FRBR, FRAD and FRSAD models and numerous standards; development of new metadata schemes (besides the MARC format); and introduction or development of new library automation systems and provision of adequate training for cataloguers. The COBISS system is also facing many challenges: transition to COBISS3/Cataloguing with a new way of updating the records in the COBIB.SI shared bibliographic database, implementation of the COBISS.SI General List of Subject Headings, introduction of amendments to cataloguing rules, format, software and the system as a whole.

A special challenge within the COBISS.SI bibliographic system is the quality of records. It is necessary that cataloguing work is undertaken by a smaller number of cataloguers and that adequate training is provided (Knjižnični sistem Slovenije 2009–2010, 2011, p. 30).

In the second half of 2010, different associations in the library sector (the National Council for Librarianship, the Slovenian Public Libraries Association, the National and University Library, etc.) and the Institute of Information Science started to explore the possibility of establishing a centre for acquisition, processing and technical services at the national level or at the level of regional libraries.

3.2.6 Education, continuous professional development

Higher education in the field of library and information science is provided at the level of formal and continuing education and functional training programmes.

Formal education is provided at the Department of Library and Information Science and Book Studies at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana, which has already implemented the Bologna related reforms. The three-year undergraduate programme of Library Science and Informatics includes three courses: Library Science, Information Science and Book Science. It also serves as a foundation for the advanced study at the postgraduate or specialist level, and for the lifelong professional and scientific training, as the candidates gain the knowledge and skills for managing the world of information. The following programmes are available at postgraduate level: Library Science, Information Science, and Library Science, Publishing Studies and School Librarianship.

The goals of educational programmes are to gain theoretical knowledge in the fields of library science, information science, publishing and book science, development of the capacity for lifelong learning, and also for research activities, encouraging professional awareness and a positive relationship to the library sector.

The opportunities for continuing professional development and training in the workplace are provided by different types of library and information institutions and associations (the national library, the Slovenian Library Association and its sections, the Department of Library and Information Science and Book Studies, the Slovenian Public Libraries Association, the Slovenian School Library Association, etc.). Workplace learning is delivered mainly by the national library and the library and information service, in particular to the needs of developing and using the shared catalogue, and working with users. It is intended for all staff in the library service, and includes library and information science subjects needed to provide the library public service and the legally defined content and tasks (Analiza stanja na področju kulture s predlogi ciljev za nacionalni program za kulturo 2012–2015, 2011, p. 168).

3.2.7 Professional and stakeholder integration

The library employees, primarily professional workers, are engaged in regional library associations, which are united by the Slovenian Library Association. It is a voluntary, independent and non-profit professional association comprising eight regional library associations (Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje, Koroška, Gorenjska, Pomurje, Primorska, and Dolenjska) and uniting over 1300 Slovenian librarians.

The professional work is undertaken voluntarily in permanent working bodies – in the following sections: Public Libraries, Mobile Libraries, Academic Libraries, School Libraries, Special Libraries, Students of Librarianship, Local Studies and Cultural Heritage, Youth Librarianship, Education and Staff, Promotion and Marketing. The Governing Board or the Professional Board can also establish temporary working bodies - professional committees to pursue theoretical issues. The Slovenian Library Association collaborates with libraries in the Slovenian diaspora, and with other library associations, mainly in the neighbouring countries and the countries of former Yugoslavia. It is also active in the sections of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA).

The Public Libraries Association is an independent, voluntary and non-profit association of legal persons – public libraries in the Republic of Slovenia, which are connected to a network for mutual interests in the field of managing library operation in public libraries (Ibid., p. 169).

3.2.8 Conclusions

❶. **The share of public library members to the total population remains at the achieved level, whereas library lending grows within the same number of members.**

The survey among the public library members, users and non-users (cf. Chapter 3.9) revealed that more than 50% of users and non-users use the public library services through other members. To this end, it can be concluded that the public library services in Slovenia are used by a higher proportion of population than are the registered membership figures. If all those users had registered, the membership figures would have been indeed very close to the provisions of the standard (»In the area of library operation, library members should represent at least 40% of total population«), or the share could even exceed 40% (Standardi za splošne knjižnice, 2005).
It would be sensible to attract to membership all potential users by better promotion of public library services.

Statistical data shows that library lending grows within the same number of members whereas the survey among the public library members, users and non-users (cf. Chapter 3.9) revealed that among members there was a gap between the knowledge of and actual use of individual public library services. More than 50% of members know and use just the most traditional public library services, including borrowing fiction and non-fiction, to meet their needs of personal learning or continuing education, and provision of information on desired books and other material by librarians. They know other services but they use them much less frequently.
As today's public libraries offer their users access to much more than just books, it is necessary to advance awareness and promotion of lesser known services.

❷. **The number of public library professional workers** is constantly growing, but not fast enough to catch up with the modern technological development in library operation.

❸. After some years of gradual improvement, **the mean number of the annual additions to stock** has started to decrease in recent years.

❹. During the period 2000–2009, **the share of funds for library activities** was falling; therefore, the performance of legally determined tasks was not achieved to the full extent anticipated. There is no joint data how the shares of funds for library activities in individual municipalities have been developed. Yet, those municipalities that are aware of the public library potential invest satisfactorily in the sector.

5. Public libraries do not focus enough on local studies and users with specific needs by determining the measures for implementing **the special tasks** from Article 16 of the Librarianship Act.

6. **Offering of services for different target groups of citizens**, including specific groups of users, in individual libraries is not evident in any document at the national level. The blind and visually impaired are partly an exception as they are considered in the document »Establishing the adequate Status of the library for the blind and visually impaired in the library system 2010 (Vzpostavitev ustreznega statusa knjižnice za slepe in slabovidne v sistemu knjižnic 2010)«, and in public libraries, this kind of service already exists to a great extent. The annual reports of individual public libraries and professional articles can partly reveal the current condition.

7. **Uneven development of public libraries** (town, regional) in certain regions. The research shows that socio-economic conditions in certain statistical regions have a significant effect on the conditions and development of library regions.

8. **Problems in the performance of special tasks of regional libraries**, uneven development, funding, unclear distinction of tasks between the coordinator at the National and University Library and the coordinators at regional libraries, who still do not differentiate completely between the core and special tasks.

9. **56 out of 210 Slovenian municipalities do not have a town library, and from these 56 municipalities, there are 47 with no location of a mobile collection.** 8,5% of all citizens of the Republic of Slovenia live in the municipalities without a town library, and 7,6% of the population live in municipalities without a location of a mobile collection.

10. **There is a need to rationalize cataloguing** throughout the country (a central agency for the acquisition, cataloguing and processing of all library materials at the national or regional level).

11. **The formal involvement of the public (citizens, users)** in the preparation of programmes and library work, weak knowledge on strategic planning and operation, weak or deficient definition of the development and objectives in the public libraries' programmes. Deficient evaluation of library work, professionalism and benefits for users.

12. **By collecting the data and information on performance and condition of public libraries in Slovenia, we conclude** that due to the dispersity of data on operation and services of public libraries, which are presented in a range of documents, there is not a

full and adequate picture on the condition and performance of public libraries at the national level, especially from the perspective of the implementation of services specified under the Articles 2 and 16 of the Librarianship Act. The overview and performance evaluation of public library operation in Slovenia are monitored to a greater extent through the secondary statistical data and analyses. They reflect the level of achievement and harmonization with implementation of various legally stipulated objectives, tasks and national standards. There have not been any measurements of the efficiency and effectiveness of operation and satisfaction with the offer from the perspective of a user.

Taken together, the findings suggest the key features:

- relative effectiveness of public libraries (the growth of library collection, additions, number of employees and issued items in the period 2000–2009)
- insufficient funding (for library material, staff, etc.)
- uneven development of library network and no library service coverage in some regions
- problems by the implementation of regional public libraries' tasks
- inefficient work organization (cataloguing)
- dispersity of data not providing adequate and full picture on the condition and operation of public libraries at the national level
- methodology for determining the fulfilment of conditions for operation of public libraries not providing adequate feedback.

3.3. Legal environment

An overview of the decade since the adoption of the Librarianship Act (Gazvoda, 2011) showed that public libraries have developed significantly, particularly in the fields of information technology, user services, and modernization of library premises. The funding and the level of meeting and, in many cases, even exceeding the conditions for the performance of activities were also stable. The legislation offered to the providers of funds the foundation for a better understanding of library service, its significance, and the content that should be provided. Those municipalities that are aware of the educational potentials of libraries and of the positive attitude that the citizens have towards them, have additionally invested in libraries, and thus, provided good operation and maintenance. Unfortunately, the law does not have any provision to force the municipalities to finance the libraries as they should according to the law. The penalties thus provided for do not have any power in the relation towards the legislation on Local Government.

It should also be determined that some provisions have not yet been implemented, not even by the state. The latter has undertaken to fund certain library functions; however, it has not committed itself to any acceptance of a fixed amount of funds. Thus, the range of funding is defined according to the respective political priorities in the field of culture.

The fact that not all provisions of the law concerning specific type of content have been enforced fully in practice is even more conspicuous than funding, which is always in the direct relationship with the economic health of the state. Therefore, it should be decided as to whether it is still reasonable to pursue the provisions for which there is no genuine possibility that they will be exercised in the future, or which have already been proved to be impracticable. Whilst it is clearly necessary to amend the law, thorough consideration should be given to the content of law, and if it is more reasonable to look for a better solution, or maybe, to include those provisions in other legislation. Above all, the essential question will arise if library activities in the fields of culture, education and higher education and science should still be included in the same law.

Legislative solutions concerning public libraries
The current 2001 Act for the first time clearly defined library activities as public service, and with that, the former term »library information system«, already including elements of public service, was replaced. The introduction of the term »public service« is very important, especially from the view that this is a service which has to be evenly developed, and it should provide users with the same or very comparable level of services across the country, like other public service systems, e. g. education, health care or social service. There, the public library service has entered the area of local government, which has defined public library as an original municipality activity in its legislation. Thus, the circle between the service, users and providers of funds has been closed. Due to uneven development of local authorities, and consequently, different capacity of provision for library development, the state has also preserved its role in the public library service. Its task in this case is that it ensures as equal development as possible and assists with its funds to achieve the standardized range of activities.

Besides public libraries, the law has also defined the activities of school, higher education and special libraries as public service. Yet, the implementation of this provision is not efficient as it meets with the legislation from other fields that provide for their libraries in other ways.

Public libraries' activities as public service
There is a range of precisely defined tasks of public libraries in the law that are within the framework of public service and libraries are obliged to perform them. It is especially significant that they are defined as institutions of lifelong learning, and thus, they greatly stand out from the main concept of culture and enter into many other fields included in the lifelong learning, which is one of the constants of human life. Public libraries have outstanding

opportunities to reach all sections of the population to become their members combined with the legal provision that core library services should be free of charge for users.

Another important field of their activities is collecting and distributing the documents of local history and contemporary local community life. With the enforcement of the law, local studies and heritage has become a function that should be implemented in every public library, i. e. at the regional level, in the immediate vicinity of the local user. Thus, public libraries enter the field of cultural heritage, which has not been characteristic for them until now.

Public libraries are obliged to provide free access to electronic resources of public authorities. Thus, they have gained an important function to participate in democratization of society as they also offer help to those who are not computer qualified, or do not have appropriate equipment, and they ensure better information for citizens on their rights and duties.

Also various activities in the field of bibliopedagogy offered to different groups of users are defined as public service in the law, including activities or educational events for all age groups of users and users with special needs. These elements are very important for public library operation as, in the end, they support the activation of library collections to promote understanding and development of reading culture and information literacy.

It has been determined in practice that there are great differences among libraries in the fields of bibliopedagogy and biblioandragogy. Particularly larger libraries show much more energy to maximise readership by attracting users to join their reading events, or to come to the library with the intention of cultural and information education, learning and literary gathering, whereas smaller libraries often lag behind, principally due to lack of staff and funds. Namely, there is no framework for the providers of funds to fund a certain range of activities of lifelong learning in libraries, so they can decide on the minimum amount of funds.

In some areas of the country, citizens are, therefore, deprived of the so-called comparable services. The range and content of learning activities funded by the state and the municipality should be defined in the law. Maybe it would also be sensible to redefine the core and upgraded services (activities with added value). The core services should include all the compulsory services provided in all libraries, and provide for their compulsory financing.

The law defines that all public libraries should be included in the national shared bibliographic system. From the perspective of profession and organization, Slovenia has connected libraries into a uniform information space. According to the smallness of the country, this is very appropriate for the efficient use of libraries. It is certainly a great advantage in comparison with other countries that users in Slovenia can search online all the public libraries' catalogues at once.

Unlike the definition of the appropriate range of collection or the way of bibliographic processing, from the organizational point of view, the law does not determine the management and content of library collections. The view of management is especially of great importance, as in this regard, the only provision in the law is that book stock is library's property. If this provision is compared to the provisions regarding the establishment of a library, the question is raised immediately, whose property is the material funded by a municipality which is not a founder of the library, and whose is the material funded by the state to meet the needs of the municipalities. The law could also define the professional principles regarding the content and quality of library collections.

Foundation issues

In compliance with the law, the founders of public libraries are municipalities, but not necessarily in all cases. It is important that municipalities provide public library service, but they can also perform this function by renouncing the status of (co)founder and entrust the implementation of library activities by contract to another library. The law offered such form of organization to enable libraries to function as normally as possible. Namely, some libraries operate in even more than ten municipalities.

Yet, the law does not stipulate that (at least) some municipalities are obliged to establish a library, and there could be a problem. If the role of a founder is not accepted by any municipality, the others would also not be able to make a contract with libraries for the provision of library services and the law itself could disintegrate the library network! Hence, the core library network should have been defined, and for certain municipalities, the foundation of a library would have been compulsory, at least, for example, at the level of regional libraries. All other libraries in that region could connect to a particular number of large and/or medium-large libraries by a contract if they wanted.

The contracting relationship between municipalities and an individual library for the purpose of carrying out activities as public service is a very appropriate form, which can make the service less expensive and more efficient. This is particularly true for human resources, as it is reducing the need for management, technical and administrative staff. As a result, they can work collaboratively to set up shared back-office services, and then, better quality can be achieved due to specialization in specific professional tasks.

Besides, this law is not specific enough to outline the asset management when public service is delivered by contractors. Namely, it does not stipulate the governance of library premises and equipment that are owned by the municipality contracting with the library. It is not clear if such a municipality should transfer the assets to libraries to manage them or not. The legal

regulation of property relations, also the issues of the ownership of library material, is one of the most important proposals for amending the legislation.

Fulfilling the conditions for providing activities

In practice, there is another area that is below expectations, namely, the conditions that public libraries should fulfil to be able to work with users. It turned out that it is impossible to link the conditions for the provision of activities with the foundation and operation of libraries, or even with their registration in the court registry. The law states that »fulfilment of conditions« means that the library has to fulfil all conditions to operate legally. Hence, it would be more appropriate if the level of »full development« would be lowered.

Regional libraries

Regional libraries are the invention of the current law and, to a certain degree, they replaced the former parent function of these libraries. The legislator has estimated that the parent functions are still needed in some areas specifically defined in the Rules on Regional Libraries. The field of regional tasks has developed the most in the last decade. It has been revealed that regional libraries have many potentials for the development of services, which are or could be interesting for all libraries in their regions. Furthermore, by performing the functions defined by the Rules they have gained a good overview of the quality of public library service. There is a widespread opinion that libraries can achieve more in partnership, and that smaller libraries can really gain a lot from the larger ones. In the last few years, the co-ordinating role has been mainly directed into planning digitization projects and contributing digital »stories« to the common portal Kamra, providing joint continuing professional development and workplace learning, exchanging good practice, and collaborating in the automation of the process and purchasing computer and communication equipment. They have also started to provide joint access to electronic databases in their regions, and to offer favourable conditions for their use. The ways of collaboration are open in the future as well. There is a general view that regional libraries could function as a common human resources centre to solve some eternal library staff questions. Some options for sharing back-office services are: acquisition and cataloguing, legal issues, public procurement, informatics, maintenance and accountancy, repositories for weeded material, book binding service, and many other offices that would operate for all libraries in the region. Consequently, the common expenditure costs would be decreased, and staff could focus on working with collections and users.

The library legislation does not provide such development of regional tasks as it is now suggested for the next decade. Therefore, it is advisable to amend the Rules on Regional Libraries as quickly as possible, and to define their tasks in such a manner that they will enable the development of public library service in the proposed directions.

A similar example of probable and certainly necessary collaboration of regional and other public libraries is the field of e-book lending, which will be experienced in the next few years, and maybe, for the first time, libraries will be seriously faced with a question of their existence. Therefore, e-book training for staff will be one of the common priorities.

Norms of development

One of the fields of legislation where no progress was made in the last decade, in spite of the provisions of the law, is the norms of development. The drafters of the law have considered that a three-year period is an appropriate time for the levels of standards to be revised upwards on the basis of actually achieved average in individual set of activities, and they have aimed at driving up performance. This legal provision has not been developed yet. In the current situation, it should be reconsidered if the norms of development are still needed at today's level of library development. It would be sensible to leave the initiative for development to libraries and municipalities once the minimum conditions have been satisfied. In other words, this means that public service should be just a service within the required conditions, whereas further development should be pursued in the direction of providing above standard services, which would be funded by municipalities according to their judgment and capacity.

Public library funding

Legislation has enabled the providers of funds, who benevolently take care of their libraries, to determine the scope of funds required for adequate library development. The number of new and reconstructed libraries has never before been as high as in the last decade. This is also a result of legal environment that clearly shows the expected level of activities to the municipalities and the state.

On the other side, numerous public libraries stagnate or even decline. Municipalities and the state have become prisoners of their budgets and they allocate the majority of funds on the basis of demands of the laws. Thus, the library legislation is weak as the funds for libraries are expected to be allocated on the basis of programmes, which usually consider only the compulsory minimum framework of business operation, but, for providers of funds, this is the maximum amount that they will provide, or not even that. In the time of crisis, there is a growing tendency to decrease the funds.

At this time, it is hard to expect to find another model of funding that would ensure sustainable development and operation. Nevertheless, more specifically defined costs of services would present a better foundation for determining the amount of needed funds for libraries. This also means that municipalities could decide for themselves which services to fund, and which not. Calculating the costs for individual service would make more sense, as is obvious from the fact that it is much easier for libraries to define the needed amount of funds for salaries and purchase of material. Namely, they know the rules of public sector wage system and the average

price of a book, whereas by calculating the programme costs and investments, they can only depend on the comparison with the previous year, or on the current availability of municipality budget funds.

The range and quality of library activities, as well as the professional development of libraries, depend most on the programme funds, which differ a lot among libraries, estimated according to the number of citizens. And as we say – this is the field where providers of funds »stand or fail«. By decreasing the programme funds to the minimum, in the extreme situation, library activities are reduced just to borrowing books, whereas their appropriate scope would enable them to release the professional potentials and to become cultural and learning centres of the local communities. Due to the possibility to supplement the programme funds, libraries have to acquire their own funds, and this should also be defined in the law.

3.4 Economic environment

In the crisis that we face today, rational spending of public funds is more than necessary. The budget users must prove their mission statement also by measurable performance indicators, so that they convince providers of funds and the public about the need of their existence. It would be sensible to identify cultural, educational, social and economic impact of libraries, which are determined to be the users of budget funds in their communities, but the decision makers have no knowledge of direct and indirect benefits provided to the community by libraries. Namely, libraries are completely non-profit making institutions. They have been founded with the purpose to provide services which are recognized by wider society as being vital and necessary, and which other profit-directed organizations cannot or do not wish to offer to wider population groups. Hence, it is unfounded to measure the business performance only on the basis of their economic contribution, as they have been founded with the purpose to operate in the conditions in which the profit organizations would not survive (Dimovski, 2002, p. 695). Tavčar names such companies as non-profit because their main purpose is not creating profits; they are intended for socially useful purposes (Tavčar, 2005, p.16). The state or local authorities establish public institutions for the performance of educational, scientific, cultural and sport activities, healthcare, social and child welfare and other non-profit activities (Ibid., p. 18).

The raison d'être of non-profit organizations is to engage in socially useful purposes, for general public interest, which are, by principle, managed by the state as public interest, and on the other side, by the citizens as common interest. The result of the state's functioning is the so-called public good, which is available to everybody under the same conditions, and is defined by public legislation (laws, rules) (Kolarič et al., 2002, p. 10–13).

Libraries do not obtain their funds in the market; the share of their own resources is only up to 10% of the whole budget. Without the state and municipal funds, they could not finance their activities. Thus, they depend completely on the understanding of the public interest and public goods, which are legally enforced under the principal and relevant legislation (Zakon o uresničevanju javnega interesa za kulturo, 2002, Zakon o knjižničarstvu, 2001).

The Public Interest in Culture Act (»Zakon o uresničevanju javnega interesa za kulturo«) defines the public interest as creation, distribution, protection and preservation of cultural goods at the national and local levels. It is implemented by providing the conditions, and determines the following competent authorities as the bodies responsible for the public interest: parliament, government, ministries and local authorities. The public cultural good is also specified – it is the cultural good which is provided by the state or local communities as public service or in the form of support to individual cultural projects (Article 2) within the framework of public interest.

Libraries are holders of public interest; therefore, the relevant law exactly defines their tasks, whereas rules and standards determine their core services, minimum standards for performing public service, development of activities and other elements of their existence.

Consequently, public libraries are adequately regulated as non-profit organizations and as holders of the implementation of public interest. The legal framework of their activities, performance measures and performance indicators are specified. The regulation is carried out at the national level and funding at the local level. Yet, the arbitrary behaviour of the providers of funds is not appropriately regulated, and they can determine the level of funding without considering the legal provisions. Lack of funds does not ensure the fulfilment of conditions that would enable libraries to implement public interest, and to provide equal access to public cultural goods for the citizens in local communities. Funding is inconsistent and unstable and it reflects the relationship of an individual local community towards such a non-profit organization as the library is. The relationship of the local community is not always proportional with the effort of the library and its management to achieve the conditions of work that would enable the fulfilment of legally stipulated tasks or the application of standardized performance indicators. At the local level, the political culture is not commensurate with the expectations of users, nor even with the satisfaction of regular library users. This is the reason for the unequally developed library network.

The pressure on the consumers of public (taxpayers') funds can be positive and a motivating factor, in the sense that the expenditure for the implementation of activities must be duly justified on the basis of public interest, and also the benefits of such an organization to local community must be highlighted.

Libraries regularly collect the statistical data on their activities and submit them to the relevant authorities. The data is publicly available and facilitates to establish the range of their operation on a regular basis. This assists library management and local communities in determining the benefits of investments into the services, in particular, by submitting arguments for the need of financial resources.

Providers of funds, the local communities and the state, have to consider and decide proactively, which activities should be supported and why. Therefore, they need arguments, and also knowledge and a vision what is of great importance to the local community and the state. It is particularly necessary to consider the costs and benefits and make decisions for maximum benefits in terms of costs. Recognition of the economic value of libraries, besides their social, cultural and educational value, is especially important for stable funding of their activities. Although public library service is held in high esteem by the general public, their role is still very much undervalued. Yet, libraries should be able to present their value like other public institutions, and to justify the economic impact and benefits to taxpayers by providing economic attributes.

The massive cuts to the funding of library activities by the local providers of funds (municipalities) and the state is also the consequence of economic crisis and recession. In the future, public libraries can expect a further decrease of the already inadequate funding (this was already the case in 2010).

Within budget based financing of publicly available services, the current economic environment is not favourable for public libraries, and consequently, this can lead to:

- a thorough examination of the internal operation, a review of internal reserves (Open too long? Too many activities? Not enough joint resources? Too much funds spent for the purchase of material? Patronage and sponsorship of library programmes by upper classes? Generate funds through joint library projects?).
- a more planned management based on strategic planning, collaboration in the form of strategic alliances with different organizations in the community (cultural, educational, tourist, etc.), synergistic effects, identification of economic effects of public libraries on the community and searching for alternative financial resources to fund the services tailored to the needs of users.

Whereas, in the light of economic crisis, the decrease of people's purchasing power, emergence of more and more poverty and social weakness make the economic environment also »favourable« for public libraries. It is in these times of crisis, that libraries, as non-profit service organizations in the public interest, can provide equal access to goods for all citizens, including

information, learning, knowledge, possibility of involvement in a range of interest groups, spending quality leisure time, etc. Smaller purchasing power, growing poverty and social weakness cause an even greater exclusion of individuals, and actually, libraries are the only democratic places with unlimited access to culture and knowledge in the local communities, which have to recognize these vulnerable groups and ensure the programmes for adults, children and youth.

Conclusions

By determining the condition of the economic environment and the need for uniform development of library activities across the country, the following needs are indicated:

1. to shape a model for the presentation of results and economic impact/effects on the public library environment that would present the library to providers of funds and decision-makers as an economic factor and not just as a consumer of public funds.
2. to make a research in order to determine the differences in development in terms of the funding of libraries, on which the law imposes the same tasks and which are the agents of the fulfilment of the public interest, and to identify the factors that influence different funding schemes.
3. to reconsider a possible need to transfer the funding from local authorities to the state, and thus, empower citizens to exercise their right for equal access to public cultural goods.
4. to collaborate and rationalize the planning and designing services at the national level.

3.5 Technological environment

3.5.1 External Technological environment

External technological library environment is determined by the state of development of the information and communication technology, its supply and prevalence in Slovenia and worldwide, the way of living of the citizens, and various regulations and recommendations. Libraries do not have a great impact on the external technological environment; they are mainly forced to follow it.

The supply situation, the spread of ICT use and services, and the state of e-competencies of citizens showed the following picture in 2011:

Communication services

Broadband internet
At the end of 2010, there were 493.000 broadband connections to the internet on the Slovenian market (6% more than at the end of 2009 and 16% more than at end of 2008). There is an increase in the number of connections via cable modem (29% from 2008) and the number of connections to optical network (77% from 2008). The number of the other broadband connections (including the fixed wireless access) has grown for more than five times in the last two years.

According to the data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (Uporaba informacijsko – komunikacijske tehnologije v gospodinjstvih in pri posameznikih, 2011), 72% of households had access to the internet and 67% of households had broadband access in 2011. There is a rapid fall in the use of dial-up internet services (50% per year). Lack of knowledge, no need to access the internet, and the costs of access and access equipment are the most frequent reasons why some households still do not have the internet access.

GSM mobile service

At the end of 2010, in Slovenia, there were 2,1 million mobile telephony users, which is an increase of 3% compared to 2008, and 1% higher than in 2009.

Among people aged 10 to 74 years, there were 90% of users of mobile phones in 2008. Among them, there were 24% who used their mobile phones for sending photographs and videos in the first quarter of 2008. 11% of people browsed the internet via mobile phones, 8% downloaded photographs or video directly from mobile phones to the Web sites. There were 5% of people who subscribed to information services and 5% read their e-mails via a mobile phone.

Worl Wide Web
According to the data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, the internet is used by 69% of population aged 10–74 years, and 66% use it once a week or more often. By the Statistical Office data, there are more regular users of the internet among the younger citizens – in the age category 10–24 years 98% of users, and among 55–74 years only 29%.

According to the report E-competent citizen of Slovenia today (»E-kompetentni državljan Slovenije danes«) (Prevodnik, and Vehovar, 2011), Slovenia is around the EU average in terms of the usage of the information society services among the EU-27 states (70% of the internet users in 2010), but it significantly deviates downwards among the retired and inactive (SI 24%

and EU 40%). In Slovenia, the least educated, housewives and foreigners mostly lag behind. A more thorough analysis has shown that the development of e-competencies is significantly above the EU average in almost all segments, except a group of adults aged 55 or more who are far behind in all regards.

However, according to some data, the use of the internet among retired population is rising. According to the survey Measurement of the use of the Websites (»Merjenje obiskanosti spletnih strani« – MOSS) from November 2011, a proportion of the retired population among the website users increased for 62% in comparison with 2009, and among them, at least 38% browsed classifieds websites and 28% searched for tourist information at least once per month (Več kot tri četrtine slovenskih spletnih uporabnikov v pokoju, vsaj enkrat na dan brska po spletu, 2011).

Use of the internet according to specific activities (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia)

- 60% for sending and receiving e-mails
- 53% for searching information on products and services
- 51% for reading or downloading website news, journals or dailies
- 46% for searching information on health and for reading web forums
- 37% for acquiring knowledge from online encyclopaedias
- 34% for services connected with travelling and accommodation
- 34% for acquiring information on education and courses
- The websites of the state institutions have been used for personal use by 44% of the population in the last 12 months, especially for acquiring different information (41%) and forms (31%) and for sending back the completed forms (13%).

The indirect measure of general and ICT literacy in Slovenia (Raba interneta v Sloveniji, 2008) revealed that, in both areas, there are more groups who are distinguished by age, education, gender and activity. We can identify four groups: i) low ICT and middle general literacy (low-educated older women, 26%); ii) low ICT and low general literacy (low-educated older men, 18%); iii) middle ICT and high general literacy (educated women of middle age, 30%) and iv) high ICT and high general literacy (educated, younger, in-school population, 26%).

Social network users in Slovenia
The portal Use of the internet in Slovenia (»Raba interneta v Sloveniji«) made a research on the use of social networking in Slovenia, which highlighted the aspects like security and privacy, publishing data and photographs, and the use of social networks among children and parents.

The web survey results have shown that 60% of respondents have set up their own profile on at least one of the numerous social networking sites. Younger people, mostly aged 16–25 years (75%), women (63% of women compared to 57% of men), residents in places with more than 2.000 population, and middle educated citizens (72%) are in the majority (Vehovar, Kuželički Jerman in Lebar, 2011).

Regarding the status of respondents, the schooling population stood out the most (children, pupils, and students); somewhat more than three quarters reported that they use at least one social network. Adults who were least likely to have used the internet included farmers, helping family members, people unable to work due to sickness, age, disability, etc.

eBooks, eReaders

Statistically, the US ranks first with the greatest number of eBooks (16 %), followed by Great Britain with 9,4 %. The estimates for Slovenia indicate that 3.000–4.000 people read on eReaders. There is a limited range of available eTitles in Slovenia, but more publishers plan to introduce the eBook supply chain in the near future.

Public libraries have not resolved the following issues concerning eBooks yet:

- licence and/or purchase system: there is an open dilemma about the licensing/purchase options
- preservation system: according to the form of »acquisition« of material, it is the next question where eBooks will be kept: on servers, on media carriers, etc.
- eLending system: currently, it is not available in public libraries yet, except together with eReaders. It would be sensible to develop or purchase a common platform for all public libraries, if possible, by administering the platform from one point – a joint digital library?

In this field, libraries have to follow the technological environment of their business partners (publishers) to provide in time the support for their internal environment (library).

3.5.2 Internal technological environment

The internal technological environment in libraries consists of two sub-environments: environment for internal users (staff) and environment for external users (members and other library visitors).

Both sub-environments should follow the development of technical possibilities, and consequently, the development of public library activities. In the library, we should ensure the hardware and software so that the employees can carry out their tasks without any greater interruptions. We should ensure that problems will be dealt with and solved in an efficient and timely manner. The professional expertise of staff in this specialized area (a system administrator, IT officer) and an organized support in case of more complex problems (a possibility of outsourcing) should be specified. For both environments, we should provide adequate security when entering into the information system and transferring the personal data. The legislation and recommended standards must be taken into consideration (e. g. ISO 27 000, personal data protection, etc.).

The issues related to the provision of adequate security measures, organization and operability of local area networks are present in some smaller public libraries which do not have adequately qualified staff. Cooperative efforts of system administrators from regional libraries have contributed to the enhancement of this field to some extent.

There is a tendency of the computers and peripheral devices in libraries getting older as they are not replaced when they should be, and it can be expected that, due to the critical financial conditions, this will be intensified in the next few years.

The COBISS/OPAC provides the service »Moja knjižnica« (My Library), still, all libraries have not yet exhausted all possible options that it offers. There are many development possibilities to improve these services and the COBISS/OPAC interface in order to make them more user-friendly and more similar to the experience users have with more advanced web services.

The technology can help to a great extent by overcoming specific barriers met by the users with special needs. The library should provide the use of equipment intended for those users together with the use of equipment for other users, and it should offer its services through both channels to the possible greatest extent. Libraries lack the more detailed knowledge regarding the users' specific needs as well as the most up-to-date knowledge on technical solutions that meet their needs. Furthermore, the implementation of these solutions is also a great financial burden.

3.5.3 Conclusions

The external technological environment is favourable for libraries in Slovenia. The provision of equipment for broadband access to the internet in households, the use of World Wide Web and the level of competencies are at high level. Yet, there are some groups of population that are excluded in this regard. The reason for the exclusion is connected with the lack of technology and the essential competencies.

In the next few years, it will be hard for the Slovenian public libraries to follow the development of the external technological environment and to integrate it into their offer. For them, the technological environment is a big financial burden. The smaller the library, harder it follows the progress. The modernization and development of new equipment forces them to buy new devices because the older equipment cannot be upgraded anymore and then becomes unusable. This is especially a problem in libraries where they strive to meet the users' needs. We need to consider an organized system of co-financing (e. g. from big equipment providers) and joint participation.

We need to develop as many joint technical platforms as possible, at the level of, e. g. public libraries, so that we can be competitive. Namely, individual libraries will be too slow, and also due to lack of finances, will not be able to carry that out (good practice: remote access, the KAMRA portal).

Inventories of ICT equipment, which are maintained by a group of system administrators, have to become a permanent practice. Through them, we get a description of technical equipment in libraries (internal environment) with the added value. By collecting various data on library environment, we can also gather (e. g. regarding the type of users) indirect data on their technical possibilities, and then we can adapt our offer (inside or outside the library).

Technical support enables increasingly easy access to the Web or to other applications with powerful graphics support. The COBISS system does not follow that. We should consider a simpler workflow in the circulation department, without a lot of clicking, etc., and a better interface for users.

3.6   The demographic picture of Slovenia

In the middle of 2011, the population in Slovenia was 2.052.496, of which 51,4% were women, so there were 102 women per 100 men. There were 83.737 foreigners, of which the majority (72.595) were the citizens of the former Yugoslav republics. It is interesting that the number of female foreigners rises whereas the number of men foreigners is constant.

In Slovenia, the life expectancy of the new-born infant is shorter than in the more developed EU's 27 member countries; however, it is rising in Slovenia as well. A boy, born in Slovenia in

2009, can expect to live for almost 76 years and a girl to little less than 82 years. In the last decade, the life expectancy is 6,2 years longer for men and 4,9 years longer for women.

The population of Slovenia is getting old, and this fact represents one of the biggest economic and social challenges in the future. At the end of 2010, there were 16,5% of the population aged at least 65 years, and ten years ago, there were only 14,1% of citizens of that age group. In 2010, the ratio between the active population and the number of retired people was 1,6.

By slowing down the mortality rate in the second half of the 90's, the number of births was already lower than the number of deceased. Thus, the natural population growth rate, which has been gradually declining since 1979, has become negative. In spite of the positive migration growth rate since 1993, the number of citizens was falling until 1998, and from that year on, it has been slowly rising according to the registry data.

Currently, Slovenia has one of the lowest poverty rates, as well as the lowest inequality in the distribution of income between households among all EU countries. Undoubtedly, the welfare state contributed to the relatively low income inequality with its redistributive function. Various forms of social transfers relieve hardships of low income households. Without a functioning welfare state, the situation would be much worse in Slovenia, as the poverty rate would have doubled and the income inequality would have risen. Data on the rates of poverty risk of various socio-economic categories of persons and households showed that the households with no working people were in the worst position (40,1% of persons were living below the poverty line in such households), especially those households with jobless family members and dependent children (74,8%).

3. 7 Social environment, social changes, lifelong learning

3.7.1 Social environment and social changes

Public services, such as health care, educational and cultural services, have been identified as important factors that either increase social inclusion or inequality in the society. Public libraries as public service should provide the maximum accessibility, and in their communities, they should act as socially responsible institutions that are aware of the need to support the environment in which they operate. Public library services should be designed in such a way to have a more significant impact on the quality of life for all people.

The objectives of the plan for the overall enhancement of the social environment are: to create new and better jobs, to improve health, security and the quality of working environment, to

provide access to social benefits for migrants, to foster research and to ensure funding for the economic development. The social environment is not homogeneous and static but dynamic and flexible.

Since 2008, during the recession, the social conditions have led to social change with a strong social responsibility, which has been reflected in the social inclusion, systems of social security, fight against discrimination, civil society relationships, fight against unemployment, improving the quality of jobs and ensuring better working conditions, the protection of the environment and rational use of energy. The current social situation calls for social change as a clearly changed pattern of social behaviour and relationships among individuals, groups and societies, which also means the changing of values, norms, social symbols and other cultural products. Social change must be based on social justice, which includes the delivery of goods and their distribution in the society.

This is not only an economic crisis but also a social, value and environmental ones, and it has reached all segments of society and requires responsiveness and strategic planning at all levels.

To realize the economic growth potential, the European Union has set itself three priority objectives, which are based on professional training and lifelong learning, encouragement of research and innovation, use of smart networks and digital economy, modernization of industry, efficient use of energy and resources:

Smart growth addressed by three flagship initiatives:

❶. Digital agenda for Europe – creating a unified digital market, which will be based on fast and ultra-fast internet connections and interoperable applications.
❷. Innovation Union – research and development and the policy of innovations focused on climate changes, efficient use of energy and resources, healthcare and demographic changes.
❸. Youth on the move – to help students and trainees to study abroad, to better prepare young people for labour market, to strive for higher effectiveness and attractiveness of the European universities in the international environment, to enhance all levels of education and training (academic excellence, same opportunities).

Sustainable growth addressed by two flagship initiatives:

❶. Resource-efficient Europe
❷. An industrial policy for the globalisation era

Inclusive growth addressed by two flagship initiatives:

❶. An agenda for new skills and jobs – for individuals: assistance by gaining new knowledge and skills, adaptation to labour market change and choice of new career; for the community: modernization of labour markets to raise the employment level, decrease the unemployment, growth of work productivity and provision of sustainable systems of social security.

❷. European platform against poverty – to provide economic, social and territorial cohesion, combat social exclusion and poverty and ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources, training and support by searching a job and access to social assistance. (Europe 2020, 2010).

The Slovenian Exit Strategy 2010–2013 has been conceived as a combination of economic policy measures and structural changes that at the same time maintain fiscal sustainability and alleviate the social conditions of the most vulnerable groups, while strengthening the competitiveness of the economy and facilitating creation of new jobs. It includes the measures of economic policy, structural measures (changes to the pension scheme, changes to the long-term care system, changes to the healthcare and health insurance system) and institutional adjustments (adjustments in the management of public institutions and public administration, adjustments in transport and energy infrastructure, aimed at efficient environmental and climate policy) (The Slovenian Exit Strategy 2010–2013, 2010).

As stakeholders of national development, libraries are addressed to fulfil the objectives and policies defined by the state with widely accessible and responsive services. Starting from the public library's core mission, the Slovenian public libraries have to set out in their new strategy such objectives and actions in the fields of social environment, social change and social responsibility that include:

- same opportunities for everyone
- strengthening solidarity
- balance among generations
- inter-regional harmonization
- sustainable development
- quality of life of the masses.

3.7.2 Lifelong learning

The White Book on Education in the Republic of Slovenia 2011 highlights knowledge as the key factor of development and operation, individual's learnability is becoming an ever more important competitive advantage in the global economy. However, knowledge should not be reduced only to its economic value. The White Book stresses the importance of the development of a critical and empowered citizen, who is capable of reflection on technology, who controls it, and who does not just blindly adjust to it. Correspondingly, the authors perceived the relationship to the information society. A wide access to information is its characteristic, yet, the issue of their credibility, quality and accuracy is even more underlined. The emphasis is on the capability of critical evaluation and selection of information, which can only be guaranteed by the high-quality information that provides broad knowledge and open-mindedness.

Formal education should prepare the schooling population for lifelong learning process by teaching them how to learn.

There is an on-going need for learning also after completing formal education. It is no longer just the right to lifelong learning because of the knowledge itself. Instead, it becomes the duty of every individual. Lifelong learning is important for developing personal potentials, for the general education, and also for managing the conditions of one's own life, that is, active social and political participation.

In the field of lifelong learning, the White Book sets out a range of objectives, including:

- provision of access to quality education and learning opportunities
- provision of conditions for achieving high quality standards of knowledge at least at the level of completed secondary school
- decrease of structural and personal barriers to inclusion of adults by providing information and counselling, developing innovative methodical approaches and specific approaches for persons with special needs, improving educational offer, etc.
- increasing motivation of vulnerable groups for education and learning, including recognition of knowledge, information and advice, promotion and special support activities (Krek in Metljak 2011, p. 377).

The White Book presents the proposed solutions, and here are those regarding informal education:

- Establishment or improvement of system structures that connect all actors in this field in order to expand and enhance the offer and quality of programmes.
- Increase of investment in the development of innovative forms and approaches, as well as creation of learning environments that will include target groups.
- Linking the acquisition of key competencies with gaining professional skills and skills for life.

- Provision of better transparency of the results of education.
- Additional incentives for inclusion into national vocational qualifications (NVQ).
- New forms of education, programmes and initiatives for the vulnerable groups are being developed as public interest. They are intended for the development of key competencies for social inclusion and inclusion into the modern information communication environment. Then, new motivation measures and new forms of programmes for active citizenship and sustainable development are being designed.
- Introduction of incentives for the development of educational opportunities for adults, who are less motivated to participate in the traditional educational and learning activities.
- Establishment of a network of educational organizations, which will geographically cover Slovenia and facilitate access for all citizens to quality education and learning.
- Municipalities should ensure the provision of informal education for their citizens.
- Municipalities should ensure the functioning of the organizations that implement programmes accessible to all in the communities with the state financial support.
- Along with this, the educational role of non-governmental organizations should be encouraged.
- Provision of a free information and advice service to offer support before, during and after the education is completed, and special attention should be given to the vulnerable groups and partnership working with other organizations (Krek in Metljak, 2011, p. 397–400).

3.8 Members, users and non-users (non-members) of public libraries in Slovenia

From the perspective of librarianship, the performance of the Slovenian public libraries is monitored and assessed annually on the basis of data provided by public libraries through the questionnaires, which are prepared, collected and published by the Library System Development Centre at the National and University Library in Ljubljana.

Besides other data, the annual data collection categories include the number of public library members, their total population share, and the number of library visits. The latter is divided into two categories: young users (members) aged up to 15 and adult

users (members) of public libraries. The results of the data analysis reflect the level of achievement of the various statutory objectives and tasks, and the level of achievement of the national standards, which determine the operation of public libraries. Each category of measurement is compared with the previous period. Thus, the libraries' performance is measured at the state level and compared to the statutory requirements and recommendations developed by the library science.

Nevertheless, these analyses of the public libraries' performance do not include the data which would have been obtained by the primary collection, i. e. by measuring the satisfaction of citizens with library services, their perception of public library services and their needs, expectations or wishes.

3.8.1 The condition in 2010

According to the data by Library System Development Centre at the National and University Library in Ljubljana, in 2010, there were 2.086.541 potential users (292.717 young people up to 15 years of age and 1.793.824 adults), and 504.354 citizens registered as members in the Slovenian public libraries (151.986 (30 %) young people up to 15 years of age and 352.386 (20%) adults).

The data shows that 24,6% of the population are members of public libraries. In 2010, the official statistics recorded more than 9.5 million visits to the Slovenian public libraries.

The data obtained serve to identify how public libraries operate in accordance with the established guidelines within the profession. Standards for Public Libraries, for example, state that the library should include among its membership at least 40% of the population and at least 60% of young people up to 15 years of age.

It is obvious from the data collected by the Library System Development Centre for the year 2010 that libraries do not meet the above standards of registering citizens as their members (24,6% of the population and 52% of young people up to 15 years of age). In the last five years (2006-2010), there has been stagnation or a slight decline in membership of both the whole population and young people up to 15 years of age, while visits of all members show a gradual increase in the last five years, with the exception of decline in 2009.

Membership and visits to public libraries in Slovenia in the period 2006–2010

Year	Total number of population*	Population/ young up to 15 years of age	Population/ adults	No. of members (% of population)	No. of members/ young (% of population/ young)	No. of members/ adults (% of population/ adults)	Total number of visits
2006	2.010.377 (library data)	303.008	1.707.369	538.865 (26,8%)	164.965 (54%)	373.900 (22%)	9.190.569
2007	1.937.337 (library data) 2.025.866 (Statistical Office data)	279.504	1.657.833	525.682 (27,13%) 525.682 (25,94%)	165.535 (59%)	360.147 (22%)	9.572.465
2008	2.032.362 (Statistical Office data)	304.251	1.728.111	502.627 (24,7%)	164.124 (54%)	338.503 (20%)	9.983.856
2009	1.948.811 (library data) 2.046.976 (Statistical Office data)	272.725	1.676.086	506.599 (26%) 506.599 (24,7%)	160.973 (59%)	345.626 (21%)	9.200.197
2010	2.086.541 (library data) 2.050.189 (Statistical Office data)	292.717	1.793.824	504.354 (24, 17%) 504.354 (24,60%)	151.986 (52%)	352.368 (20%)	9.538.406

* The data on population is provided annually by public libraries to the Library System Development Centre; however, it differs from the Statistical Office data in individual years.
Source: http://cezar.nuk.uni-lj.si/analize/index.php

For business planning of individual libraries and for planning the development of the strategy of the Slovenian public libraries for the future, it is important to know: what the current and potential users, citizens of Slovenia, know about the operation and provision of public library services; what is the distribution of the use of individual services; what are the reasons for not visiting libraries; how users perceive public libraries from the view of their personal and social benefits, etc. This is the aspect of external environment (users) using primary data, which complement secondary data.

3.7.2 A public opinion survey among the citizens of Slovenia

As a basis that could contribute to planning the public libraries strategy, the working group for the preparation of the Slovenian public libraries strategy of the Slovenian Public Libraries Association carried out a telephone survey among the general public – the population of Slovenia aged 15 and more. This survey was conducted among the members, users (a person who is not registered in the library (not a library member), but visits its events and/or uses access to the internet and/or uses material in the library) and non-members of the Slovenian public libraries in order to:

- make a research of various groups of visitors/users of public libraries (members, users, individuals who use public library services exclusively through others)
- check the knowledge of public library services
- examine the distribution of the use of individual public library services
- identify the reasons for not visiting public libraries
- measure the perception of public library benefits from the viewpoint of the wider community and from personal viewpoint
- evaluate proposals for further development and future direction of public libraries
- measure the satisfaction with public libraries and the work of librarians
- check whether the members and non-users represent a homogeneous group or they can both be classified into more smaller homogeneous groups that differ among themselves significantly regarding the results profile (the segmentation method)
- obtain the starting-points for developing the strategy for further development of public libraries.

The research was conducted by the company Interstat d.o.o., and the report and analysis of the results based on the implementation of public opinion telephone survey among the general public in the Republic of Slovenia is available at: http://zdruzenje-knjiznic.si/dobro-je-vedeti/dokumenti/.

Research findings

The main findings arising from the report on the research among the general public lead to some strategic priorities for the public libraries development:

❶. More than 70% of public library users use the services through others – the majority through their children, a bit less through their partners, parents or friends.

❷. A bit more than 40% of non-users (non-members) use the public library services through others - the majority through their children, a bit less through their partners, parents or friends.

❸. The total sample of users and non-users includes 54% of respondents who use the library services through others.

❹. 24,6% of the population are members of the Slovenian public libraries. It is clear from the first two paragraphs that, in fact, more people visit public libraries and use their services, yet, they are not registered as public library members.

❺. There are differences between the understanding and actual use of individual public library services. More than 50% of members and users know, and therefore, use just the most traditional public library services, including borrowing of fiction and non-fiction for study purposes, and acquiring information on books and other material from librarians. Between 40 and 50% of members are aware of some other services, like borrowing film and music CDs and DVDs, access to the internet and e-mail, and access to COBISS/OPAC. They do not know other services to a greater extent, or if they do, they do not use them.

Summing up of the findings 1–5:
Users and non-users use the services through others, the difference is between the understanding and the actual use of public library services among the members and users, the understanding and use of traditional services prevails. These are the potential members of public libraries. How to attract them? How to present to the public the benefits of the apparently non-traditional services? How to awaken the potential of users through the presentation of benefits of use of services for individuals and society? It should be considered what kind of motivational techniques libraries need to use to attract potential users.

❻. Among the reasons for not visiting libraries in the group of non-users the personal reasons prevail: lack of need for services provided by public libraries, lack of time, buying books, use of the internet.

Question: Is it more sensible to focus on users and non-members who already use certain public library services through others in the strategic directions for the following few years, and ignore non-members, among whom prevail personal reasons for not visiting libraries?

❼. With the segmentation of members into three groups within which individuals are as similar as possible and groups among themselves as different as possible, the group of inactive members is especially interesting. The majority of inactive members are aged 60 and over or they are retired or less educated (primary school education or less). They are

represented above average among those who do not know the public library services (this applies to all of these services, except for borrowing fiction (the traditional library service)).

Question: Is it sensible to dedicate special attention to this target group?

❽. With the segmentation of non-users into two groups within which individuals are as similar as possible and groups among themselves as different as possible, the group of potential users is especially interesting. The majority are younger individuals aged between 25 - 44 years, graduated (high or university education) or with a post-graduate degree, and employed with an income of 1.600 EUR and more. They use the services through others, and they do not visit the library mainly because of lack of time. They know most of the listed public library services, and for those that they do not know, they think that they would be useful for them.

Presumption: Potential public libraries members!

❾. Respondents highly rated the benefits that libraries brought to the wider community and to their personal lives. There is a high level of satisfaction with the library and the work of librarians in the community.

Summary: To organize user involvement in the campaign to persuade various stakeholders in the environment (potential providers of funds) about the important role of the public library in the community, the process of advocacy, friends of the library, etc.

❿. On the average, the respondents think that it is important for public libraries to (mean score close to 4): improve services for users with special needs, enhance the provision of information and material on local studies and cultural heritage, better inform the public about their offering, improve the selection of books and other material, and enhance the assistance to users by borrowing library material. They also mentioned the need for electronic and talking books.

3.10 »Competing« institutions in public library environment (providing the same or similar services)

Nowadays, more advanced and modern formulations are used for the implementation of individual roles that public libraries fulfil through their mission in the society (cultural,

information and social role, the role of lifelong learning). They include all these roles through the public library services as:

- a place of inspiration (contemplation, concentration, music, digital media)
- a place of learning (lifelong learning, courses, informal learning, counselling, homework help for children, access to knowledge)
- a place of meeting (meetings, public debates, lectures, panel discussions, politics, socializing).
- a place of events (writing workshops, collaborative work, play and learning).

Users as active participants are in the forefront in developing library services, therefore, libraries need to adjust to their needs and requirements, and at the same time, guide their behaviour and needs.

Yet, users can still decide otherwise, and public libraries as public service are also in competition in the market, though they often do not think so. The great threat is complacency with their offer. They believe that everyone must support and use libraries as they meet the broader interests of the society and are designed exclusively for the benefit of the population. However, this is not nearly the case. Users can also borrow library material from other libraries, non-book material can be borrowed from video store, they can buy it in a bookshop or online through the internet (even in a digitized form), information literacy is offered by other educational organizations in the community, forms of lifelong learning for seniors can be provided by pensioners organisations or adult education institutions, users can access the internet and email free of charge at other places and not only in the library, and last but not least, fairy tale hours and creative workshops for children are available in shopping centres, readings and presentations of fiction and non-fiction and well known personalities are offered by many other institutions like bookshops, cultural associations, etc.

Thus, there are many alternatives in the market today for different target groups of users of public libraries, including the offer of other non-profit and profit organizations (in the fields of education, culture, civil initiative, etc.).

Knowing the user is as important as knowing the competitors in the public library community. In this context, we can establish where there are possibilities of collaboration and joint service offerings for specific target groups in order to achieve synergy effects (everyone contributes what can do the best). On the other hand, through the study of the environment and competition, the library can identify its own internal strengths and external market opportunities, and then, it can shape and position its offer in such a manner that its services will differentiate from other providers which offer similar or the same services. The difference is in added value that will distinguish the library offer from the others so that users will

recognize greater benefits if the service is used in the public library, not elsewhere (quality of services, more appropriate location, professional staff, remote library services, librarians as educators for the use of information on the Web (information literacy and evaluation of information, etc.)).

No systematic research on competition is carried out by the Slovenian public libraries, however, in recent years, there are many joint projects that link individual institutions to offer various services to users – collaboration between public and school libraries; collaboration between public libraries, museums and archives by implementation of exhibitions and building of digital collections; and there is also some collaboration between libraries and companies.

❹. International policies and strategies of public libraries and the European Union documents

DENMARK

The Public Libraries in the Knowledge Society (2010)

The document was published by the Danish Agency for Libraries and Media. The Committee on the Public Libraries in the Knowledge Society was appointed by the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with the parliamentary cultural committee. Its task was to put forward recommendations and suggestions for the development of Danish public libraries as an easily accessible offer to everybody.

The working groups have been dealing with six areas:

❶. Traditional services (reading promotion)
❷. Digital infrastructure and the interaction with traditional services
❸. Provision of digitized cultural heritage and licensed information resources
❹. Models for various forms of learning
❺. New partnerships
❻. Competence development of library staff

Starting points for the preparation of the document:

- The municipal reform in 2007.
- Knowledge, innovation and social inclusion are vital factors in future development of lifelong learning.
- It is no longer enough just to make a good collection available to the public. The materials have to be promoted in new ways that appeal to the citizens and motivate to lifelong learning.
- Helping citizens to develop fundamental IT and information skills – more and more people get lost in time-consuming and ineffective information searching for daily problem solving.
- The library's informal character of education is particularly useful to provide access to knowledge for those citizens who have certain barriers in relation to the formal educational system.
- Library's value in the knowledge society is in the increasing need of citizens to be able to transform information into new knowledge and to use this knowledge to create new value.
- The Danish society is late modern society that opens up for a cultural liberation and encourages new thinking and innovation.
- Culture supports the creation of the identity of an individual and the nation as a whole.
- The library is society's last non-commercial meeting place, which the majority of the population uses.
- To be present on the internet means that the library goes where its users are.
- Digital technologies make it possible to offer the users access from anywhere and at any time; Library's growing interest is to reduce the number of non-users; according to the survey results users would use the library more, if there were more events, more materials and longer opening hours.
- 85% of the Danish adult library users visit the library to borrow books and journals.
- The Danish Cultural Strategy emphasises culture for everybody, cultural institutions should focus more on non-users.

There are five actions recommended for the Danish future library development:

❶. Open libraries
❷. Inspiration and learning
❸. The Danish Digital Library

❹. Partnerships
❺. Professional development.

Open libraries

The committee recommends that a new concept for the physical library space be developed. The library should moreover locally work systematically on establishing alternatives to the traditional library space, such as libraries that are integrated with other types of local institutions, as well as new flexible library services. Thus, libraries will increase the degree of accessibility and ensure that the library is an offer extended to the entire population. Longer opening hours: libraries that are open for part of the opening hours WITHOUT staff – this is a prospect for smaller branches threatened by a closure.

The committee recommends that:

- the library space is a library service that should be further developed.
- a more targeted and offensive promotion of materials is developed: the need for more material is fulfilled through better promotion and digital offer and not just through increased purchase.
- partnerships are established to perform the activities in the library space.
- diverse and flexible forms of service are further developed.

Inspiration and learning

The committee recommends that the public libraries work systematically on further developing and strengthening the library's learning offers based on the users' needs. In the field of learning, the partnerships are the most important for libraries in order to ensure the best possible educational/learning services. The partnerships between public libraries and educational associations are in the founder's interest to provide the best possible exploitation of the municipality's resources for lifelong learning. Focusing specifically on helping the citizens to develop fundamental IT and information skills is still the main challenge for libraries.

The committee recommends that:

- local partnerships with the educational associations are established.
- an extension of the existing efforts to develop the Danes' IT skills takes place.
- partnerships for improving reading among groups with reading disabilities are established.

The Danish Digital Library

The committee recommends the establishment of the Danish Digital Library (DDL) as a common digital access point for all Danes. This means that apart from physical materials the library will be able to offer digital media such as films, music, literature and games. The user will moreover get access to new experiences, a digitised cultural heritage and networking with other users via social networks. DDL will be a common access point to the libraries on the internet as well as contributing to the citizen meeting the library elsewhere on the Web.

The national level campaign: downloads of music and e-books through the web site (Bibliotekernes Netmusik – the libraries' net music) – where as a library user you can via your municipality download music for free: experienced over 2,5 mil. downloads in 2008 – an increase of 48% compared with 2007.

The committee recommends that:

- DDL is established as soon as possible as a common organisation for all national library services.
- all relevant stakeholders agree on the DDL organisational structure.
- the public libraries establish an ever closer coordination of the purchase of digital materials.
- the public libraries extend inter-library loan cooperation with the academic libraries to include also digital materials.
- the public libraries strengthen free access to information.

Partnerships

The committee recommends that libraries work systematically on establishing binding partnerships in order to create a multitude of offers across the public sector, business life and civil society.

The committee recommends that:

- the libraries enter into partnerships with a view to strengthen and develop the library and its offers to the public, including the relation between the library, the citizens and the local community.
- the libraries join partnerships across the public sector, the private sector and civil society.
- the libraries enter into partnerships that explore and exploit new digital platforms in mediation contexts.
- the Danish Agency for Libraries and Media and the Ministry of Culture work

together within a long-term horizon on strengthening the libraries' motivation and ability to enter into partnerships.

Professional development

The committee recommends a stronger focus on competence and organisation development in the libraries as well as a more strategic and systematic preparation of the library's offers based on the users' needs.

The committee recommends that:

- each library decides on a plan for how best to support staff competence development through a wide variety of possibilities, e.g. recruitment, further education, organisation form and 'on the job' training, etc.
- the common competence development, which is organised under the auspices of the regional libraries, be extended and intensified.
- as part of the public management training, tailor-made modules are established and targeted at leaders in the cultural sector.
  (The Public Libraries in the Knowledge Society, 2010).

See also: Vodeb, Gorazd. (2010). Študijski obisk danskih knjižnic. Knjižnica, 20 (12), 18–20.

Knowledge and competences

(Scandinavian Public Library Quarterly (Volume 43, NO.4 2010): Professional Skills)

Key competences required for the Danish librarians to support the vision of a new library, which:

- Is available on the Web and in the traditional physical space.
- Constantly offers services that assist citizens to efficiently cope with their lives.
- Inspires users to learn through all types of media.

The three meta-competences are:

1. The ability to acquire knowledge and ability to use it and transform it into activities with a high added value.
2. The ability to handle the many relations (individual's or the whole organization) involved in creating a dedicated and relevant service profile connected with the internal and external library operation.

3. The ability to handle a dialogue between a multitude of attitudes and values and establish and communicate a platform for the library services recognized by staff as well as by the public.

Five competence fields have proved to be necessary:

1. Skills in instruction, teaching and intermediary activities. These skills should be seen in relation to the growing need for supporting media and digital literacy.

2. Skills in marketing.

3. Updated competences in ICT for all staff members - in the coming years they will be crucial for the transformation of the library in a way that matches new services competing with library services.

4. Professional competences in various subject fields.

5. Skills in leadership and management.

Two most pressing leadership challenges in the culture and library sector have been identified:

1. To be able to work in a new type of organisation, which is connected to international projects, teams and networks, and collaborate in the development of different policies in: tourism, health care, children's care, etc.

2. To be able to embrace processes of change and development as a permanent condition in the library operation with emphasis on:

- users and politicians who want more choices in terms of services
- ICT development that supports these services
- greater focus on non-users
- requests for entering into projects and partnerships.

The Danish Centre for Leadership and Governance has developed the educational programme for leadership in cultural sector with two modules:

1. Team and network leadership

2. Management of processes of change (Professional Skills, 2010).

NORWAY

Library Reform 2014 (2006)

The Norwegian strategy has been prepared by the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority in accordance with the assignment given jointly by the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research.

The Norwegian strategy has three areas:

1. Contents and services

2. Structure and organisation

3. Competence and research

Two questions have been raised in the strategy: what role should the library play in the society and what should tomorrow's library look like. The library is an important institution of knowledge. It supports knowledge at all levels of education by encouraging reading, learning languages, literature promotion, information literacy and provision of learning places for the local community. The library should be a well-equipped place for formal and informal education. The library's ability to manage the increasing offer of information is very important and its competences in this field are vital for the library services development.

Norwegian Nationwide Library shall ensure access to knowledge and culture for all the country's inhabitants.

The four cornerstones of the library of the future are:

1. access to physical and digital material

2. net-based access to library catalogues, home pages, portals, information services and documents in full text

3. professional support for those seeking information and learning, both in the library and on the internet

4. an inspirational meeting place for reading, learning, involvement and the acquisition of knowledge

	The digital library	The conventional library
The building	The portal, the digital structure, the virtual space	Meeting place, cultural arena, learning center, the physical space
Collections	On-line, full-text databases, sound, pictures, catalogues	Physical collection (printed material, sound, pictures), catalogues
Services	On-line reference services	Reference services
Network	Co-operation with regard to digital services, digital distribution	Interlibrary lending, mutual rules and standards

STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES FOR THE CONTENTS AND SERVICES AREA

❶.1. **Digital content and net-based services**
Initiative: To establish an ALM-portal (archives, libraries, museums) providing joint access to net-based cultural and knowledge resources
Initiative: To implement the Norwegian Digital Library programme
Initiative: To provide access to central sources of knowledge through licensing and other fee-paying arrangements

❶.2 **Digitisation of important content resources**
Initiative: To establish a programme for digitisation of material in archives, libraries and museums

❶.3 **Developing new digital services**
Initiative: To promote the testing of new ICT-services and solutions

❶.4 **Improving the library as a learning resource arena**
Initiative: To establish regular co-operation at a national level between library and educational authorities
Initiative: To develop tools and methods for the teaching of information skills
Initiative: Using open digital solutions to ensure access to scientific information produced at universities and colleges

❶.5 **Further development in library dissemination of culture and literature**
Initiative: To implement a special programme for the dissemination of literature
Initiative: To achieve allocation of funds from the national budget to support the production and presentation of literature

Initiative: To develop an action programme for the strengthening of libraries, archives and museums as centres of local history
Initiative: To strengthen and expand the state purchasing schemes for literature and other media

❶.6 **Strengthening libraries as contributors to greater inclusiveness, integration and cultural diversity**
Initiative: To contribute to the integration of immigrants by the promotion of literature and knowledge

❶.7 **Strengthening prison library services**
Initiative: To implement plans for prison library services

STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES FOR THE STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION AREA

❷.1 **Strengthening and developing the organisational units**
Initiative: To establish stronger and more efficient public libraries through a process of consolidation bringing together the libraries of several municipalities
Initiative: To launch a programme for the development of school libraries

❷.2 **Improving the physical library space**
Initiative: To establish an investment programme for library premises
Initiative: To equip all libraries with high-speed wireless local area networks

❷.3 **Developing a user-oriented, integrated nationwide library**
Initiative: To establish transport arrangements for the distribution of material throughout the Norwegian library system
Initiative: To change present library legislation so as to make possible full co-operation in a national library network
Initiative: To strengthen the requirements for school library services as provided for in the Education Act
Initiative: To make the Norwegian Nationwide Library known to the public through a profiling of content and services

❷.4 **Developing tools and methods for the evaluation and improvement of library activities**
Initiative: To develop tools and methods for the evaluation and improvement of library activities.

STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES FOR THE COMPETENCE AND RESEARCH AREA

❸.1 Renewal of overall competence in the library sector
Initiative: A programme to raise the level of competence and thereby strengthen the Norwegian Nationwide Library and the consolidated libraries
Initiative: An exchange programme for library staff

❸.2 Support for greater knowledge-sharing between different areas of library activity and for closer ALM - collaboration
Initiative: Establishment of network groups composed of participants from different types of libraries with a view to developing new services, new working methods and organisation
Initiative: Strengthening and developing expertise at the National Library of Norway in the fields of copyright and the protection of privacy
Initiative: Research programmes to include the ALM sector
(Library Reform 2014, 2006).

FINLAND

Finnish Public Library Policy 2015 (2009): National strategic areas of focus
The new Finnish Public Library Strategy was prepared by the Ministry of Education.

In a rapidly changing society, Finland wants to protect the citizens' right to culture and access to information and knowledge by the new strategy.

Some starting points for the new library:
- the library is a basic service along with comprehensive education
- library legislation and the government's funding
- the strengths of the libraries
- libraries answer to future challenges by focusing on expertise and emphasizing quality
- future success of libraries must be earned
- the patron always at the center

What needs to be done at the level of municipalities:

Implementing the basic mission
- Enough well-educated staff available.
- New materials and types of services.

Libraries as accessible learning environments and meeting places
- Funding for public libraries will be re-evaluated from the perspective of an accessible center of learning.
- More and more, the library facilities will function as learning arenas.
- Library facilities will be modified to support learning, working and socializing.

Library services for pre-school, comprehensive school and upper secondary school
- Daycares, schools and other learning institutions actively use basic public library services.
- Creating custom library and information services for schools and educational institutions that do not have their own library requires the existence of overt contractual practises.

Toward a new culture of service and assembly
- To succeed, libraries should know how to approach patrons and their various needs.
- Current patron needs will be the basis for library systems and services, not the previous services earlier considered correct.
- This requires a new way of thinking and a re-evaluation of attitudes and the traditional service culture.

What needs to be done at the state level (Ministry of Education):

Development of government funding
- Investments will be made in long-term projects that involve the entire country and will be innovative.
- Active participation in the National Digital Library 2008–2011.
- National projects will be supported in the utilization of libraries' joint meta-data.
- If necessary, new, alternative forms of funding will be created alongside the basic funding to answer to patrons' changing needs and communications technology as new forms of material.

Updating library legislation and creating national criteria for quality
- The rights of patrons and the equal availability of services to all patrons and the level of quality will be specified.

Regional library activities
- Regional distribution of the work in libraries will be re-evaluated in connection with the changes in the government's regional and municipal administration.

The government's central administration to support the library network across administrative boundaries
- Collaboration between various actors in the government's central administration will be reinforced and their activities will support the national development of the library network.
(Finnish Public Library Policy 2015, 2009).

GREAT BRITAIN

THE MODERNISATION REVIEW OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES:
A POLICY STATEMENT / Department for Culture, Media and Sport

The British strategic document on the future public libraries development was prepared by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It was presented to the government so its status is that of an official policy. The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport stressed in the introduction that they are aware of the variety in the quality of the library service across the country and also their bad image that prevails in some places. The fact is that visits and loans have steadily declined over the decade; however, there is also the overwhelming public support for libraries in community life. Therefore, they have to consider their further development, and unification and enhancement of the expected activities quality.

The strategy includes six aims.

❶. To drive the quality of all library services up to the level of the best. The Library Offer will be made up of a 'core offer' of services which all library services should deliver and a 'local offer' of services, shaped and delivered at local level.

The core library offer should include the following provisions:

- Library membership from birth
- An opportunity to have your say and get involved in shaping the service
- Free access to collections, online resources and information that meet local needs
- Access to the national book collection – any book from anywhere
- Free Internet access for all
- Help to get online
- Links to other public services and opportunities
- A Community of Readers
- Flexible opening hours
- Commitment to customer service and expert, helpful staff

- 24 hour access to online catalogue, online reference and other services
- An opportunity to be a member of all libraries in England, etc.

A local offer for libraries can include:

- Book stock variety
- Opportunities and activities for young people
- Provisions for learning
- An Events programme
- Family activities
- Programmes of engagement with the community, etc.

❷. To reverse the current trend of decline in library usage and grow the numbers using the library service. All library authorities should make their Library Offer to the public clear and visible to all the citizens in the area. All library services should offer library membership as an entitlement from birth. Authorities should consider how to attract new members, through seeking greater community engagement and through community outreach initiatives. Local authorities should review opening hours to assess whether they meet local need. Local authorities should regularly review the footprint of the library service to determine whether they have the right buildings in the right place. Accessibility of library services should be included as criteria in the accreditation and peer review scheme.

❸. That the library service is able to respond to limited public resource and economic pressures. All library authorities should consider innovative ways to generate improvements and efficiencies through shared services, partnership working, new delivery models and new governance arrangements.
The needed actions to achieve this aim are linked to the British internal conditions in the public service sector; therefore, they are not of great interest for Slovenia. Yet, the aim itself should be achieved in the Slovenian environment as well. Within this framework, the opportunities for the development of philanthropic forms of the public library service and voluntary service would be worth consideration. Though, the latter is currently limited by the legislation in Slovenia.

❹. To ensure that all libraries respond to a 24/7 culture and to changing expectations of people who want immediate access to information.
The peer review and accreditation scheme will include criteria for recognising customer service and responsiveness. Measures to achieve the aim are: library services should advertise posts in the wider public, cross-authority strategic partnerships that deliver

improved outcomes for communities and all libraries should consider how best to attract, nurture and utilise volunteers, to complement their workforce.

❺. All libraries grasp the opportunities presented by digitisation
Free internet access must be provided. All library services should provide support and advice for users wanting to get online. A range of connections with state policies and projects are listed. Libraries should develop strategies to access and use e-books. E-books are expected to be loaned for free, including remotely.

❻. To demonstrate to citizens, commentators and politicians that libraries are still relevant and vital.
All library authorities should make the vital links to local policy priorities and needs. They should actively consider how their library service could contribute effectively to other local services e. g. services for children, schools and families, and also make connections to other local services and collaborate locally with a broad range of public, private and third sector partners.
(The modernisation review of public libraries: a policy statement, 2010).

GREAT BRITAIN

LIBRARIES: A VISION. The Public Library Service in 2015

The text was prepared as a result of a seminar conducted by Laser Foundation (London and South Eastern Library Region). It brings a very interesting context of social conditions which can also be considered by the analysis of the environment for the Slovenian strategy.

There are opinions of today's libraries in which the feeling dominates that libraries work badly instead of that they work well. Some critics consider that there has been a serious decline in loans and visits in recent years, that libraries have overspent on salaries and administration and spent too less on library material and longer opening hours, and that local authorities should have managed libraries more directly. Others even consider that libraries might eventually fade away as their operation is not adequate anymore. They concede that some of the libraries are good, however, the prevailing opinion is that most of them are bad.

Even in the libraries themselves, they believe that all is not well, e. g. libraries are very low on the government priorities list, there is resistance to change by staff, and there is certain fatalism about social change. Likewise, there are problems with management, especially with older executives. The user base is growing older, the other providers, with services similar to the library ones, are not recognized.

Therefore, library services have to be positioned as soon as possible for the next generation. The emphasis should be on accessibility (virtual and physical – in that order!), focusing on people and providing what they really need - personalised and flexible services.

Libraries need to improve performance in the following areas:

- access to information (easily accessible portals, home delivery of information – physically and virtually, reliability of information)
- social inclusion
- collections (emphasis on the material that is hard to access elsewhere, special collections, catalogues, local history, niche market information)
- staff (expertise on collections and resources, ability of information evaluation, specialization on local studies and local information)
- space (open, neutral).

The future generation users will reflect the characteristics of the whole society. There will be some people with little money and a lot of time, and for them, the library can be the only source of information and reading. Then, there will be others with a lot of money and little time, who will be prepared to pay for additional premium services.

Libraries will be expected to know how to manage changes. Consequently, to achieve this and to be able to efficiently change libraries according to the needs in the society, some changes in the managerial staff will be necessary. It will also be expected that marketing is introduced more actively to help position libraries towards other public services in local communities.

The staff will have to join that framework. There is an opinion that staff is kind but their expertise is lacking. Librarians lack skills to deliver the service to today's and tomorrow's users, therefore, they should be trained especially for:

- public relations
- presentation and marketing of library services
- gaining knowledge about »the product« (understanding collections and their content, developing skills of counselling to users, and assessing and encouraging the needs of users)
- leading skills (it is not clear in many libraries who will replace senior management when they retire).

The state and local authorities should have separate responsibilities for libraries. The state should be mainly responsible for determining policy and long-term objectives and appropriate standards (it should also provide state funding to fulfil them). The local authorities should fund

the public service. However, some people consider that if the state wants to guarantee equal library development across the country, it should take the complete responsibility for funding. Thus, the majority of funds should be provided by the state to achieve the fulfilment of standards, and local communities could still award additional funds for better performance, but only if they wanted.

At the same time, it raises the question of possible additional sources of funding. There are some opportunities, including the introduction of fees and new public sources (e. g. agencies in different sectors) and private investments. Then, higher contribution from local authorities is mentioned and joint state-local funding (which is already in practice in Slovenia).

The most interesting is the idea of different »levels« of services: Libraries need to be flexible with services as the services provided today might not be needed in ten years (e. g. basic computer courses). In addition, there will be an opportunity that some users will be prepared to pay for the services if they will be tailored to their needs. For example, users will still need to come to the library for the usual loan which will be free of charge (standard service), but home delivery or express post-delivery within one hour will have to be paid (premium service). The latter may include professional research services, compilation of a comprehensive bibliography, information on companies and other services, etc. Special features of premium services are: they are on time, professional, with the added value, and delivered in the manner required by the user. These services are provided for profit, so they are not a part of public service.

GREAT BRITAIN

LIBRARY ACTION PLAN 2013

Framework for the Future. MLA Action Plan for Public Libraries – »towards 2013«

The Action Plan for the British public libraries development 2008–2013 was prepared by Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). It consists of the following chapters:

❶.   The British national context: towards 2013
   a.   Growing, ageing and more diverse population (20% illiterate, 30% without level 2 qualifications).

   b.   Local authorities increasingly demand cost-efficient, integrated delivery, with more flexible working practices.

c.   The traditional library concept of supplying books is in part being displaced by low cost retail offers in supermarkets and online.

d.   Nevertheless, usage of library services is holding up, suggesting underlying public support.

e.   Results vary, however, with perceptions that many public libraries lack confidence, fail to attract local authority support and fall short of their full potential amid shortcomings in one or more of: leadership, advocacy, staffing, innovation and funding.

f.   Inconsistent patterns of investment stem from local political judgments, leading to under-investment and reduced book stocks.

❷.   What MLA plans to do (working with local government, national agencies, professional bodies, chief librarians and cultural leaders):

a.   advocate the relevance of public libraries and highlight the advantages of integrated provision in response to local needs

b.   promote 'best practice', support improvements in learning, information and services

c.   establish broad-based competencies for library staff and sustain investment in workforce development.

❸.   How they will do it
   a.   set their priorities (learning, communities and supporting excellence)

   b.   they will make a start on four key challenges

   •   Research and evidence. To work out how libraries can reach more people, improve satisfaction ratings and develop future provision of physical and online resources. Invest in impact research and publish the results to show the impact libraries have on reading, learning and community engagement. To identify trends, to provide information and advice to library authorities.

   •   Best practice. Successful public library services are innovative and entrepreneurial. Where appropriate, they are integrated with other services and provision to match local needs. They will identify the barriers to

integration and wider use of public libraries and advocate options for improvement. MLA will schedule regional seminars, disseminate case studies, advise, etc. They will promote the National Improvement Strategy to assess and improve performance and assure quality. They will actively promote the benefits of capacity-building by advocating a performance culture, with an emphasis on leadership, workforce skills, training and professional development. They will encourage broad-based competencies, extend the quality and reach of training and development programmes for all staff, emphasising leadership capacity and workforce skills.

- Innovation. Successful public libraries proactively envisage new ways to deliver better services. MLA will emphasise sustainable investment, integrated approaches, new models of service delivery and consideration of private sector partnership. They will highlight the advantages of new approaches including relocation and rationalisation, longer and more convenient opening times. Where appropriate, they will promote the alignment and integration of service delivery with other local provision including that of education and health authorities, museums, the arts, archives and other library services. They will identify barriers to further innovation and integration, whether financial, procedural, organisational or cultural, and work to eradicate them or at least to ameliorate their impact. They will examine options how to maximise the opportunity of new partnerships with the private, public and third sector, and maintain support for national ventures such as Find your Talent, the National Year of Reading, the Cultural Olympiad and Personalised Health Services, etc.

- Digital change. The internet in all public libraries needs to match the speed and capacity available in educational institutions – the national technical standards. Emerging digital opportunities need to be harnessed for digital consumers, linked nationally, and with improvements to the scope and variety of interactive digital services. They will make an effective case for faster broadband connections in public libraries, with greater bandwidth, manage digital data environments and further extend the provision of free or low cost reference materials to public libraries through centrally negotiated contracts with providers, explore ways to make greater use of interactive Web 2.0+ technologies, promote 'Libraries Online' and improve round the clock online provision. Advance a 'national membership' scheme to establish technical parameters that will improve services and increase convenience for

users, further enhance access to library resources nationally, leading to a single micro-chip membership card for all.

The document also includes a new interesting definition of the public libraries activities: Public libraries make a measurable and substantial contribution to local economies, and help to bridge social divides. They support well-being, encourage reading, spread knowledge, contribute to learning and skills and help to foster identity, community and a sense of place for people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures (Framework for the Future, 2008).

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PUBLIC LIBRARIES STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING STRONGER ECONOMIES AND COMMUNITIES / Danielle Patrick Milam, 2008

In the document, the author notes that the conditions in local environments have changed. Traditional local economic development strategies are now giving way to strategies that build the local assets of a knowledge economy. The focus is on the quality of formal and informal education, gaining skills for information-era jobs and workforce, a diverse and thriving small business sector that has regional and global reach, and infrastructure for rapid and current information and data exchange. She offers some possibilities:

❶. Library should be the essential part of the local early education network. Story time for children and families should not be the only activity for children, but public libraries should significantly expand their focus and resources in the work of early childhood education. Namely, the new research directly ties investment in early education to economic development outcomes. And so, the focus must be on information-age jobs which require higher-level thinking, and analytical and creative skills. Creating a solid foundation for later investment in human capital development includes mainly literacy, educational achievement, and workforce development. Public libraries are leading or participating in community coalitions to raise awareness about the importance of reading early and often.

❷ Library should be a center of career information and training. Rapid changes in employment markets and skills build workforce competencies and opportunities. Public libraries, with their broad reach to the job-age population, are attractive partners. They can enhance their collection for workforce development, including career information resources, workplace literacy programs, improved access to technology, and staff dedicated to employment services. They can collaborate with other institutions in this

field, especially by providing access points for individuals to conduct online search for jobs, and find career development opportunities. With job searches, applications, and training increasingly carried out on the Internet, they can significantly reduce the costs of local workforce development agencies.

❸. Support for Entrepreneurs. Even in the knowledge economy, small business drives creation of more than three-fourths of new local jobs. Business collections and programs should be a core part of library information services, including online databases for consumer market information, product research, and financial tracking which should be also available online from home or work. Public libraries should work with local partners to offer innovative small business planning and development workshops, and thus, they will make a significant contribution to reduce market-entry barriers.

❹. Library should be the central Community Place. Library location is of great importance as libraries attract tremendous foot traffic. Thus, that part of town becomes an active destination; synergy through co-location of important local cultural institutions and private sector activities is created. Library facilities are having a significant impact on downtown and neighbourhood vitality and image. Public libraries are considered a priority building block of public investment for development and redevelopment of places. As a destination alone, libraries also draw high numbers of visitors and tourists. It is also recommended that libraries are built in suburban malls as there is a good fit between the public purpose of libraries and the retail objectives of commercial spaces. Finally, library facilities are community builders, contributing to neighbourhood stability, safety, and quality of life (Milam Patrick, 2008).

EU DOCUMENTS

Some important EU documents have been reviewed and they show the wider context of the library activities and the basis for their development:

- The European agenda for culture in a globalizing world
- An EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child
- The renewed European Social Agenda
- The Digital Agenda for Europe.

❺. Vision and mission of public libraries

The study on Public Libraries and the Information Society was conducted on behalf of the European Commission and the report was published in 1997. The summary defines the public libraries' vision as a key player in local implementation of the Information Society, which offers:

- access to the human record in whatever form it might be stored
- a lending collection of printed materials and multimedia
- access to networks and support for net navigation and information searching
- workstations for users
- open learning and training opportunities
- a physical place offering various meeting facilities
- electronic document delivery services

and as updated public library, it will:

- have access to union catalogues for interlibrary loan and, in time
- be part of a worldwide library network
- co-operate closely with other memory institutions, schools and other educational institutions
- be a community information provider
- offer special services to various target groups - from business information to services for ethnic minorities and the visually impaired.

The local public library service will be developed in response to local needs. There will be quite different libraries within a given region, but - as a result of coordination - they will be able to establish a full range of library services in their area.

This forms part of a broader vision of the public library as an institution playing a number of key roles in the local implementation of the information society, including:

- an active partner in safeguarding democracy, providing uninhibited access to all published materials,
- a supporter of education and learning at many levels, delivering the raw material of knowledge,
- a local IT centre, providing access to hardware, software and networks, giving the citizens an opportunity to deal with a new and completely pervasive technology, and

- a cultural institution.
  (Public libraries and the Information Society, 1997).

As can be seen from the above summary, the vision developed 15 years ago already includes the directions of the public library development and fulfilment of its roles, which position the public library into the trends of the modern information and global society. Public libraries adapt to a strong move of basic patterns of human behaviour. Namely, nowadays, people focus on the lifelong learning, constant changes, innovative skills and democratic inclusion in the processes of decision making in the society.

The **mission** of public libraries is defined by the documents which combine statutory provisions and professional requirements and it follows the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994, 1995), which determines the public library as »the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users«.

Since the beginning of the 90's to the present, the public library of the future has been envisioned in a number of European declarations, the European and international library associations, state strategies in the information society and strategies of the public library development worldwide, library policies, guidelines of the public library development and in many other documents prepared by a full range of library and other professionals.

In the last twenty years and more, rapid technological development, globalization of the society, constant innovations and permanent changes have changed greatly the daily life of each individual. The fact is that in today's highly competitive and information society people are increasingly demanding products/services they perceive as beneficial to their needs. Major social changes and economic constraints require rational use of public resources to achieve social goals. All these movements affect the operations of public libraries functioning in the public interest, therefore, the development directions for public libraries at all levels should include the emphasis on people who visit the library and not on library material. Then, public library should be generally regarded as a physical and virtual space; it should operate globally, and at the same time, raise interest for the local events and ensure social inclusion of all groups of people. The operation has to be adjusted to the users' needs in the market, they must constantly question themselves on which markets they will focus and which target groups they will address, how they will meet their needs, how they will compete against competitors in the market, when they will enter the target market, etc.

At the national level, the Slovenian public libraries do not share a common vision and mission statement, but some individual public libraries and regional libraries have developed their own vision and mission.

The development of libraries in today's global information environment and innovative society is in the direction of wide-open institutions that increasingly turn »outwards« instead of their »inwardly« orientation, i. e. into their own operation and significance. They research and learn about their environment, connect with it and create an open space for dialog and knowledge. In doing so, they gradually focus on the public library user, and consequently, according to Žagar (Žagar, 2011, p. 24), they have to respond to identified needs, expectations and requirements of the users, and on the other side, libraries have to awaken needs and expectations of users through proactive thinking, and they should develop and create such services that will benefit the users by awakening their potentials. This in turn will impact the development of the society as well. The library mission should be a way of library operation that leads to progress and development of an individual (his/her potentials) and the prosperity of the society.

From the mission of public libraries, users need to understand clearly how libraries can fulfil their needs and what benefits can the use of library services bring to them and their lives, and which will help them develop their potentials.

❻. **The purpose of the public libraries strategy**

is to identify:

- **social changes** (political and economic conditions, globalization, information technology, citizens of public library environments and their expectations, competition, migration, ageing population …)
- **problems** (poor functional literacy of adults, the information literacy of the so-called »Google Generation«, commercialization and inaccessibility of cultural goods, a need for the lifelong learning due to the demands of the labour market, integration of immigrants, ethnic groups, strict library funding from budgetary resources, etc.)
- **the current position and development of public libraries in Slovenia**
- **and people's perceptions of public libraries,**
- and then, to define the **vision** (direction) and **mission** (purpose) of public libraries in a changing environment of modern society
- that determine **the national aims** and **strategies of public libraries** for the future providing **answers to:**
  - librarians: in which direction to develop the services

–   citizens: which needs can be met in the library and what personal benefits they can expect
–   politicians: to which areas of the national development strategy the libraries and their services can deliver support
–   partners: in which areas they can cooperate with public libraries
–   current and potential providers of funds: what can be the impact of the investments in public libraries activities
●   in such a way that they **can be adapted to public libraries' local conditions** and **abilities**.

❼. Strategic priorities, objectives and actions

On the basis of findings in this document, the Working Group set down the strategic priorities, objectives and actions for the Slovenian public libraries future development. They deal with the structure, organization and public library network, consolidation of the existing and creation of new services, acquiring adequate knowledge needed for the future operation, partnership potentials and public library promotion as a starting point for the understanding and recognition of public libraries and all their services as important actors in the society.

Strategic priorities, objectives and actions are recorded in a separate document entitled »The Slovenian Public Libraries Development Strategy 2013–2020«.

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