Co-creating the youth library of the future - a comparative case study analysis looking into user involvement for public library innovation

Sara Logghe*, Annabel Georges & Dimitri Schuurman
iMinds-MICT-Ghent University

*Corresponding author:
Korte Meer 7-9-11, BE-9000 Belgium
sara.logghe@ugent.be
09/264.68.69

Conference theme: Media Innovations in Cultural Institutions
Abstract
Over the last decades public libraries have changed slowly but steadily. Nowadays, all over Europe debates are ongoing regarding the roles and functions of these public libraries in the 21st century. Especially youngsters can be considered as an important target group, because they are the future library visitors. Therefore it is important for public libraries to know how they can adapt and re-invent their ‘raison d’être’ in nowadays digital and multi-medial society to continuously attract visitors. Public libraries will have to take into account the needs and wants of their visitors. Several initiatives in which end-users were involved have been organized in order to (co-)create new ideas or services for the library. Within this paper the focus will be on different methods to involve youngsters for library innovation. Therefore four Flemish initiatives will be compared with the widely-known best-practice case of public library innovation in Aarhus, Denmark (cf. Erikkson et al., 2007) and a library project in Sweden. This will be done using a multiple case study analysis in which we compare the different initiatives according to various parameters (e.g. the degree of user involvement). We based this comparative case study design on desk research, interviews with key informants and an analysis of project documents. It became clear that involving (young) public library visitors during different phases in an innovation project can result in fulfilling the needs and wants of these users. A Living Lab-approach, which is a user-centric innovation method, can be considered as a promising approach for fostering innovative ideas for public libraries together with youngsters.

Research question? What methods are being used to involve youngsters in the library innovation process? What is the most appropriate method? How can youngsters be involved during library innovation?

Keywords
Library innovation, user-centric innovation, Living labs, Youth involvement, Multiple case study comparison
**Literature research**

**Libraries**

Public libraries in the European Union have been important for the community for a long time because they offered free access to information, guidance by qualified librarians and a public meeting space. In the context of Europe 2020 - the new strategy for a smart, durable and inclusive growth - the EU has determined ambitious goals on a variety of development domains focusing on employment, innovation, education and social inclusion, and public libraries are seen as potential accelerant for these policies (Quick et al., 2013).

Libraries are evolving from a passive collection of books towards an active space where people can experience and get inspiration (Jochumsen, Rasmussen & Skot-Hansen, 2012). In addition libraries are more and more functioning as a local meeting point (AabØ, Audunson and Vårheim, 2010; Jochumsen et al., 2012). Starting from the challenges set by the societal development towards libraries and the potentials of the library of the future, a four space-model has been developed for new public libraries (Jochumsen et al., 2012). This model consists of four goals to be fulfilled (experience, involvement, empowerment and innovation), and of four overlapping spaces (the inspiration space, the learning space, the meeting space and the performative space).

Changes in our society have a major impact on the future library functioning. In Flanders - the Dutch speaking region of Belgium - library membership has drastically reduced while lending figures increased since 2011, due to an increased number of loans of audiovisual material. Also the number of visits increased the past years. From 18.717.477 in 2010 to 19.104.299 in 2011. The part of the Flemish population that is a member of a library erodes steadily, but this declining group uses the collection more intensively. Technological evolutions create alternatives for the former dominant position of libraries as providers of knowledge and culture. Websites such as Google, iTunes, Spotify or Bol.com are always available, offer a wide range of products and information, and have an international appeal and audience. Tablets are becoming an alternative for products which are traditionally popular in libraries, such as books, magazines or comics. Moreover, ethno cultural diversity increases, people live longer, new family patterns arise and more and more diverse lifestyles are maintained. The discourse of one common offer for everyone has become obsolete. Libraries fostered in a period of scarcity and were intended to provide knowledge, education and culture in a time when these facilities were not available for the general public. Nowadays, libraries have to maintain themselves in a world of excess: too much information, too many books, too much media, too much trends, too many opinions, too much to do,... But at the same time crisis has struck. Not only for local governments, but also for the Flemish authorities.

Technological and social developments often go hand in hand. The information- and communication technology caused a shift towards a network society. Thus, the library landscape in Europe is changing. In a library survey by TNS (Quick et al., 2013), a study in 17 countries of the European Union, a library is no longer seen as a location to borrow books, but also as a place to meet other people. Whether this concerns other visitors or the library staff, this social contact seems to be important for certain users. “To be away from home” is mentioned as a reason to go to the library. In this same survey, people were asked about their perception about public libraries. Only 38% of the respondents would describe their
public libraries as innovative. Young people consider the library as a space to combine social interaction and study (Quick et al., 2013). Youngsters around 12 and 18 years old are considered to be a difficult audience to attract to a library. One reason could be that youngsters leave town for further education (Corradini, 2006). Moreover Howard (2011) studied Canadian youngsters between twelve to fifteen years old. She concluded that these youngsters have a positive attitude toward their public library, but because of several barriers the library use of the teenagers was limited. Those barriers were the lack of relationships with the library staff, appealing facilities (e.g. library spaces for this target audience), teen involvement and participation. Especially the lack of involvement is challenging because youngster do have clear ideas regarding innovation of services in libraries (Corradini, 2006). Libraries should thus reach out to teenagers and make their services more connected to this target group (Aplin, 2013). Therefore it is important to grasp their ideas in order to develop library services that satisfy their needs and wants. This calls for an active involvement of end-users, citizens and especially youngsters in shaping the library of the future. For this reason, youngsters were involved as much as possible in the Living Lab research in the library of Ghent (cf. infra).

**User involvement within library innovation**

Different methodological approaches have been developed to take into account the needs and wants of end-users. Especially Scandinavian countries pioneered concerning the involvement of users during the development of products and services. These countries have been at the forefront of the participatory design movement, part of the user-centered design (UCD) tradition in which end-users are actively and iteratively involved during the design process of products or services (Bergvall-Kåreborn, Howcroft, Ståhlbröst & Wikman, 2010). Denmark, for example, has a long tradition of involving users in public service management and development (Jager, 2013). In the Aarhus library citizens are intensively involved within the development of the new library of Aarhus, the Urban Mediaspace (http://www.urbanmediaspace.dk/en/involvement). In this library a specific approach, ‘the seven circles of innovation’, is used to involve users in library projects (Holmgren & Lindholm, 2005). This approach considers innovation as a process that is embedded in a market with certain customers. Within this market innovations will develop when five different elements are set into motion. These elements, *idea generation, evaluation and planning, testing and prototyping, business planning and implementation*, will initiate a continuous process of learning and evaluation (Holmgren & Lindholm, 2005).

Another approach to involve end-users within innovation research, related to Scandinavian participatory design, is the Living Lab approach (Bergvall-Kåreborn et al., 2010). Living Labs are structured innovation ecosystems in which innovations are being developed in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders (Feurstein, Hesmer, Hribernik, Thoben, & Schumacher, 2008). This approach helps to structure and govern user involvement in the innovation development process (Almirall, 2008). Although there is still some theoretical discussion on the actual definition of a Living Lab, most authors agree that it is a way to involve end-users in the development of an innovation over a longer period of time using a combination of different research methods, following an iterative process (Schuurman, Lievens, De Marez & Ballon, 2012). More recently, this innovation approach seen as being on the crossroads of the open and user innovation paradigms, driving on co-creation (Schuurman et al., 2013).
Another method that is being used to involve users within library innovation research is the so-called ‘Library Lab’. This method originated from the notion that librarians mostly lack time and resources to spend on innovation research. By implementing the Library Lab approach, a culture of innovation can be created in the library with a minimal amount of resources (Phetteplace, Brooks & Heller, 2013). A Library Lab is “any library program, physical or digital (or a hybrid) in which innovative approaches to library services, tools, or materials are tested in some structured way before being made part of regular workflows, programs, or mission” (Phetteplace et al., 2013, p. 186). These labs mostly use rapid prototyping in which new technologies are tested in the library, integrating aspects of community-building (Phetteplace et al., 2013). However, within this approach the emphasis lies on the innovation of library computer systems.

Apart from the three methods (cf. the seven circles of innovation, Living Labs and Library Labs) described in this literature research, several other methods and approaches exist to involve end-users in a library context. However specific methods or approaches to involve children and teenagers within library innovation research are lacking. Therefore this research will compare several projects in which this target group was involved to explore which methods or approaches are most suitable.
Methodology

Comparative case-study analysis

The main goal of this paper is to analyze how children and teenagers are being involved by comparing several innovation projects within European libraries in order to explore the most suitable and successful methods. Because of the exploratory nature of this research, a multidimensional comparative case-study analysis seems the most suitable approach to make the assessment (Yin, 1984). By using this method an in-depth description will be generated about the methods (and their outcomes) that are being used to involve children and teenagers in library innovation projects. Thus, by conducting a comparative case study analysis explanatory information about the methods will be collected and related to the project outcomes (Yin, 2009). Within this section more information will be provided on how the data was gathered, the parameters that are being used for the comparative case-study analysis and the cases or projects that are being analyzed.

The data that are being used for this multiple case study analysis were gathered using different methods. By conducting desk research we searched the websites of the cases in order to find documents and more information about the projects. The databases of Web Of Science and Google Scholar were consulted to find academic papers about these cases. However, some cases that are being analyzed in this paper did not share much information about the project. Therefore we contacted some project leaders to conduct interviews with key informants and to gather internal project reports.

User involvement has been studied and discussed from many angles within the literature on user innovation (Bogers, Afuah & Bastian, 2010). An important distinction between different (open) innovation approaches is the degree of freedom of the user-collaborator (Piller & Ihl, 2009). Kaulio (1998) distinguishes between three degrees: design for users, design with users and design by users. This distinction will be used as a first parameter to compare the cases. Design for users relates to products that are developed for users by generating knowledge about user wants and needs via data on users, general theories and models of customer behavior. Design with users draw upon data related to the ‘design for’ approach, however within this approach solutions for the customers are displayed and customers can give their feedback on different proposed design solutions. Within the last approach, design by users, customers are actively involved during the product development and participate during the development of the design of the product (Kaulio, 1998).

The second parameter relates to the methods that are being used within the product development process. Pierson and Lievevns (2005) made a distinction of four phases (contextualization, concretization, implementation and feedback) of the living lab configuration in which qualitative as well as quantitative methods can be mapped. Based on the four general phases within the Living Lab configuration three phases are extracted for this comparative case study analysis. The first phase is the exploration phase in which ideas about the innovation are generated. In the second phase, co-creation, these ideas will be further developed in a prototype. When the innovation is developed, users will have the opportunity to evaluate the innovation in the evaluation phase.

In the third parameter the outcomes of the research will be compared. Therefore we made a distinction between projects that are entirely shut down, projects in which a single adaptation was made in the library and projects in which there are several adaptation (and iteration) phases.
Cases
Within this case-study analysis we selected six different projects that are related to innovation in a library context and involving teenagers or children between approximately 8 and 18 years old. Four of the cases are related to Flemish libraries because we had access to a lot of data from these libraries. The other two cases were related to Scandinavia, e.g. Swedish libraries and the Aarhus Public Libraries in Denmark. The Aarhus library was selected because of the years of experience concerning user participation within library projects. In addition, comparable with one of our Belgian cases, Aarhus is also building a new library (‘Urban Mediaspace Aarhus’) in which they intensively involve library visitors to test concepts and develop new ideas to use in the new library. Before comparing the different cases, context about the project, the methodology and the outcomes of the projects are presented.

Bib.fm
Project: By introducing a music service -Bib.fm- to listen to the music catalogue of the library of Lanaken trough streaming, Ladda vzw was hoping to get youngsters back to the library.
Methodology: 10 youngsters (6 boys and 4 girls between 14 en 25 years old) were interviewed on their perceptions, experiences and ideas regarding the application and libraries in April 2011. The research took place in two phases, first without a computer and later with a computer to test the Bib.fm application.
Outcomes: With the results Bibnet wanted to refine the music service to a user-friendly tool that invites you to experiment. However, after implementation the application was rarely used and appeared to be too technology driven. The problem was the lack of a target group and clear research questions, so in the end the concept was not adapted according to the user feedback, which resulted in a low uptake of the service.

Antenne
Project: In September 2009 M, BIB Tweebronnen and 30CC started a cultural participation project for youngsters in Leuven called Antenne. “Antennes“ are cultural volunteers, counselors and ambassadors at the age of 16 to 20 years old. The goal was to show young people that a library is more than a building with books. The original plan was to involve the “Antennes” in the organization of a new youth library, but this never happened.
Methodology: Youngsters were invited to join as “Antennes” and regularly meet in focus groups to talk about cultural events in Leuven, especially in M, Bib Tweebronnen and 30CC. In 2009, 40 Antennes participated.
Outcomes: Several meetings took place, but since 2012 Antennes have a role in the programming and organization of the cultural center and are no longer involved in the library events, mainly because of a lack of interest.

---

2 Ladda is interested in social evolutions, underground cultures and how young people move in it. Ladda looks and operates within that context in a unique way, collects and shares these insights.
3 http://www.30cc.be/projecten/antennes/
Library of Genk

Project: A research project in the library of Genk, by anthropologist Ruth Soenen, took place from March 2011 until December 2012. Her observations inspired architects and artists to adjust the library. There are a lot of youngsters in the library of Genk so they became a major part of the study.

Methodology: In the library of Genk observations were made by Ruth Soenen. She watched how people acted during their visit in the library. The goal of the research was to contemplate from the perspective of different disciplines how you can manage a library. No users were actively involved during the research, only passive observations were made.

Outcomes: Since the 7th of October 2013, youngsters with different backgrounds were invited to become ambassadors of the library. The goal is to create a better interaction between the different youngster groups who frequent the library and the library staff to cope with previous tension. The results until now are positive, especially the elderly experience less inconvenience. Moreover, the library staff can invest their saved time, because of the ambassadors, in other things. In April 2014 an overall evaluation will be made.

2020 Mars Express (Håkansson, Claesson & Gullstrand, 2008)

Project: The 2020 Mars Express was a Swedish project that was completed in 2008. The main purpose was to know what public libraries have to do to be perceived as more interesting, creative and welcoming for children and young adults (4-17 years old). Different librarians of 15 municipalities participated in the project. They collaborated with universities and other institutions in order to experiment with new research techniques and to test prototypes.

Methodology: Project leaders conducted research into the library of the future by visiting other inspirational libraries and talking to professionals. Children and teenagers were involved during workshop and focus groups. During these workshops different methods were used to gain insights into the needs and wants of the children and teenagers (e.g. role play, painting, drawing and building models).

Within the 2020 Mars Express project, children and youngsters were interviewed and vice versa, some children had to develop their own future library and had to interview their friends and family about their design. In another research step, children were asked to observe other library visitors to see what they did at the library. By conducting this method the library visit could be envisioned from the perspective of children. Focus groups were organized to gain deeper insights into the elements that enhanced the well-being of youngsters in their library. A final method that was used during this project was the questionnaire. This was used to generate ideas about the future library and to develop prototypes. These prototypes were iteratively adjusted after feedback from the children and youngsters.

Outcomes: In the municipality of Uddevalla the interior (e.g. light, color and furniture) of the library was adapted according to the needs and wants of the teenagers. In other municipalities plans were made to make some changes in the library interior.

---

4 Genk is an old industrial city with a lot of immigrant youngsters but there are not so many opportunities in Genk for this group, so they come to the library. This caused a disturbance of the balance in the library of Genk, so measures were taken.

**Aarhus: The interactive children's library**

*Project:* During this project a number of new suggestions and installations concerning the children’s library of the future were presented to children. The main goal of the project was to create spaces for children in which they could become acquainted with new ideas and innovations. Within this case study analysis the StorySurfer project will be discussed.

*Methodology:* In the first research phase field studies were conducted to get insight into the children’s library. Those field studies were carried out in the library and included informal talks, interviews and sketch sessions with children. During other creative methods, the children had to make a video in which they could express their opinions about the library. In the second research phase, based on the findings from the field trial, several workshops were organized in which all the project partners were involved. One idea that originated from these workshop was the StorySurfer. In a third research phase a prototype was developed by implementing a Wizard of Oz workshop. In the final research phase, observations and interviews with children were used to iteratively develop the design and concept.

*Outcomes:* Because the installation was only available for a limited amount of time, there are no concrete results. Currently, it is not clear if the StorySurfer is still available in the Aarhus library. However, the research yields some interesting (academic) findings about how children handle new digital innovations in the library. For example the StorySurfer creates attention around searching information and it creates social interaction.

**Bib2.0**

*Project:* Bib2.0 or Library2.0 in English was a Flemish project initiated by the public library of Ghent. In 2015 this library will move to a new location ([http://www.dekrugg.be/](http://www.dekrugg.be/)). Within this project the expectations and needs of youngsters between 12-18 years old towards the new library were measured. By involving the youngsters during the research process, the library can be developed according to their needs and wants.

*Methodology:* This research was carried out using a Living Lab approach. Different research steps were taken to iteratively develop the youngsters’ future library of Ghent. First, a state of the art analysis was conducted by the researchers to gain insights about the libraries of the 21st century. Second, interviews with different stakeholders were conducted to further analyze the needs, wants, drivers and barriers of a library for youngsters. By analyzing the results of the first two research steps, a long list of ideas was created. In the next research phase the youngsters were involved for the first time by answering a survey. The goal of this survey was to gain insights into the different user profiles, and assess their needs and wants towards the new library. Through this survey it was possible to detect specific lead user profiles. In a next phase of the research, several workshops about the concept of the library of the future were organized with youngsters. During the creative sessions the ideas from the previous research phases were analyzed and some new ideas were generated. These ideas were presented at the library staff during an internal workshop. They had to create a concrete design to realize the ideas of the

---

6 Eriksson & Lykke-Olesen (2007); https://www.aakb.dk/projects/the-interactive-childrens-library
7 During the Wizard of Oz method user interaction with computers are examined while in the same time rapid iterative development is conducted (Green & Wei-Haas, 1985)
8 [http://www.slideshare.net/saralogghe/slotrapport-bibliotheek-voor-de-toekomst](http://www.slideshare.net/saralogghe/slotrapport-bibliotheek-voor-de-toekomst)
youngsters. The findings of the library staff were presented at the youngsters who were asked for feedback during a validation workshop. At the end of the three sessions the ten most popular ideas were identified. Finally, there was a short survey in which the different ideas were introduced to the youngsters, and in which they could vote on the idea they found the most interesting.

**Outcomes:** A final report was handed over to the architects of the new library who tried to take into account the ideas of the youngsters as much as possible. Also, there will be follow-up projects organized between the library of Ghent, REC radio centrum and a group of youngster volunteers originating from the core panel of the Living Lab research while the new library is being built. There is also an exhibit about the research trajectory which will run in different locations in Ghent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Design for users</th>
<th>Design with users</th>
<th>Design by users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bib.fm</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Product development by experts</td>
<td>Interviews with teenagers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-creation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antenne</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Ideation by experts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-creation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of Genk</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Expert observation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ambassadors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-creation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020 Mars Express</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Sota (talking with experts &amp; visiting inspiring libraries)</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>Workshops with children and youngsters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-creation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback on prototype</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The interactive children's library</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Field studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-creation</td>
<td>Workshop with partners</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wizard of Oz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Results**

When we make an overall comparison between the projects, we can decide that some of them are more successful than others. The two projects which stopped, Bib.fm in the library of Lanaken and Antenne in the library of Leuven, did in fact use the least number of methods. The Bib.fm application was hardly used and too technology driven. Perhaps this can be partially explained by the fact that users were not involved during the actual creation of the application. Also, the Bib.fm research only covered an exploration phase. The other failed project Antenne involved the youngsters even less. They were only invited for focus groups during an exploration phase. Within those two projects there was no input by the users themselves regarding the design of the concepts. In the case of the library of Genk involving youngsters was in fact part of the solution for the local disturbance by young library visitors. Youngsters were observed during an exploratory research phase and some of them were invited to join a group of ambassadors to help solving the specific problem during an evaluation phase. Until now the results are positive. However concrete input of users (design by users) was only realized during the evaluation of the concept by means of the youngster ambassadors. Thus, in this project there was a lack of user involvement during the exploration phase and there was no co-creation phase at all.

In comparison with the first three cases that are discussed above, the other cases include methods during the three phases (exploration, co-creation and evaluation). Within the 2020 Mars Express project in Sweden design for as well as design with and by users are implemented in the exploration phase. In the co-creation and evaluation phase children and teenagers made use of design with methods to further develop their library of the future.

The Interactive children’s library project also involves users in the three phases, but in a more active way. This was done iteratively in interaction with the partners involved in the project. E.g. after the field studies with the children, the project partners came together to co-create the StorySurfer. This prototype was then again further adapted by the wizard of Oz method. After this phase there was an evaluation of the StorySurfer by using a ‘design for’ users method, as subsequently the end-users had the opportunity in interviews to give feedback. Although there was no design with method included in this approach, it succeeded to iteratively develop the StorySurfer. In all these phases the project tried thus to involve the users in co-creating their library. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that these Scandinavian projects are working with user involvement in libraries for a longer time. The StorySurfer
approach resembles the Living Lab approach in the Bib 2.0 project.

The Bib 2.0 project finally also tried to involve the youngsters in the three phases. Within Living Labs, one central element is to work iteratively. This was done during the whole project period. In the exploration phase a State of the Art analysis was made and experts in the library sector were interviewed. This gave the researchers a broad perspective on the library landscape. In a next research phase, a questionnaire (design with) was launched. In this questionnaire more than 200 local youngsters were involved. On the one hand they had to score on a Likert scale the ideas of the experts. On the other hand, the youngsters had the opportunity in some open questions to give other ideas about their future library. There was also a workshop in which these ideas were evaluated in a workshop with youngsters. At the end of the co-creation phase, the last ideas were generated during a co-creation workshop. Next, the feasibility of the ideas and concepts were evaluated by the librarians. This resulted in five concrete concepts. Those concepts were then again evaluated by approximate 200 youngsters in a questionnaire.

In comparison with the other projects, Bib 2.0 tried to involve as much as youngsters as possible by using questionnaires to evaluate the concepts. By using this approach, the youngsters that are experiencing a higher need to change their library and are willing to actively co-operate, which we propose to call lead-users, are stimulated to develop new ideas that can be evaluated by the regular library visitors.

Considering the different research scopes and target audiences between Bib 2.0 and the interactive children library, qualitative methods seem more suitable for working with children. In the Bib 2.0 project it was more suitable to use both qualitative and quantitative methods because the project focused on youngsters between 15 and 19 years old. However, both the Bib 2.0 and the Scandinavian cases involved the users iteratively, something which was not the case in the other projects that were discussed. Those cases (Bib.fm, Antenne & library of Genk) in fact developed a concept for youngsters, but only involved them to evaluate the concepts. Therefore we think it is important to involve youngsters during the exploration, co-creation as well as the evaluation phase. Necessary elements within innovation research with children and youngsters seem to be iteration, co-creation and long(er)-term research. However, the implementation of those different research phases and methods have to be adapted to the local context, the target audience and the resources (time and money) that are available for research.
**Conclusion**

It is clear that public libraries in Europe are changing because of social, technological and economic reasons. One characteristic of the current public library state is that young people frequent the libraries less often than before. Therefore, youngsters can be considered as an important but difficult target group for public libraries. Nevertheless, they are the future users of these libraries. Research shows that involving youngsters during the development of new libraries is important to create services, activities and collections which satisfy the needs and wants of these young library visitors.

While the budget of European public libraries is being cut by the governments as a result of the crisis, it is important for libraries to innovate and stay attractive public spaces in general but more specific for the young library visitors. It seems clear that libraries are concerned about attracting youngsters but this is not taken for granted. The mentioned projects may be considered as examples of libraries which are trying to innovate and experiment with the involvement of youngsters. Although young people are not a very accessible target group, it is important to involve them during the innovation development to create outcomes which satisfy both youngster, librarians and other public library visitors. To satisfy the needs and wants of young library visitors a Living Lab can be a non-expensive and qualitative solution.

Within this research, different library innovation projects concerning youngsters were compared. It would be interesting to make the comparison again including more recent Scandinavian projects. It might also be interesting to try to develop an instrument to measure the quality of different public library projects. In this way, the best elements of every project can be combined to create “the ideal” way of involving young people in public library innovations. Although it will always remain important to embed the approach in the local context, because cultural differences and the scarcity of resources (time, people and money) have a big influence on the actual implementation. However, based on our data, we can conclude that an iterative approach, running for a longer period of time and involving users to co-create seem to yield the most positive results.
References


