The President’s Editorial

Dear colleagues,

October 2020 will very likely be remembered as one of the busiest times in the history of EBLIDA.

Three workshops are being organised online (on 13th, 14th and 16th October); they will deal with “Think the Unthinkable. A post Covid-19 European Library Agenda meeting Sustainable Development Goals and funded through the European Structural and Investment Funds (2021-2027)” – what we call TTU Workshops.

On 28th October, we will hold our Annual Council meeting online with plenty of decisions to be taken that are crucial for the future of EBLIDA. With the Annual Council being held online, we will miss the warmth and the human interchange which is one of the main assets of our yearly gathering. On the other hand, an online meeting allows for massive participation of all members, also those who were unable in the past to afford to travels to attend the Council.

I am also pleased to inform you that the EBLIDA Secretariat was invited to report about the EBLIDA experience within the Italian Festival of Sustainable development. That particular session
Secretariat will also introduce EBLIDA policy on SDG 16.10, more specifically on fake news during the Fake News Lecture series, organised by three IFLA Sections on New Media and Digital Humanities/Digital Scholarship.

Among all these initiatives, I can hardly overestimate the importance of the TTU workshops, which will mark, we hope, a new commitment of European libraries towards the fulfilment of SDGs and a new step in the understanding of the socially inclusive and digital library which emerged from the post-Covid crisis.

Old environmentalism used to say that the planet will be saved by those small commitments every individual is able to make in his daily life. How many times have you heard: “Turn off the water tap while brushing your teeth, no water waste!” True, big plans come with small tokens. Nevertheless, in a time when climate change turns into climate emergency and, occasionally, into climate disaster, one may wonder how much ground the theory of the small acts still has – isn’t it time to break with a piecemeal approach and start with more ambitious and far-reaching plans?

It is what the EU Commission under von Leyen is clearly pursuing, with a breach in relation to the past and a new engagement towards the Green Deal and sustainable development. When it met in Brussels in October 2019, the EBLIDA Executive Committee had not the slightest idea of how crucial 2020 was going to be: the Covid-19 pandemic; the radical turn taken by the European Commission on SDGs, the EU Next Generation Fund. EC Members, however, made a courageous choice by requesting the Secretariat to place strong emphasis on sustainable development and to be as committed to these themes as the European Commission is.

EBLIDA has re-questioned the approach to SDGs as a commitment taken by individual libraries in Europe; we go further and deeper than the consideration that SDGs are stories to be told for advocacy purposes. We are pursuing a strategy where SDGs are articulated in coherent and ambitious policies that redesign library directions in the near future. Unknowingly, our approach was timely; policies at local level are now set up according to SDGs; some libraries have already been asked to devise their budgets in accordance with environmental and societal requirements as well as sustainability criteria.

TTU workshops in October will be followed by national workshops where consultancy work will be offered by EBLIDA on how to set up policies meeting SDGs in EBLIDA member countries through European Structural and Investment Funds. Service design in libraries should be “structurally” different from the past and also take stock of the European Urban Agenda, where an important action for more visibility of public libraries is included – Laura Seifert, from the German Library Association is reporting about that in this Newsletter.

This Newsletter also includes extracts of the contributions made by Marjolein Oomes and Christophe Evans during the Milan Conference on 16th of September. Marjolein and Christophe are Members of the ELSA (European Libraries and Sustainable Assessment) Working Group. In Milan, EBLIDA was given the opportunity to present its work in an ad hoc session, which was attended by 50 participants in presence and more than 500 remotely.

Finally, this Newsletter will also report about library work related to the attainment of SDGs 16 and 17 of the European 2030 Agenda of Sustainable development.

It is not, of course, the end of the story; keep posted with us and read the November 2020 Newsletter, where the ELSA report will be published as well as the outcomes of the Annual Council.

Yours sincerely,
How do library services match SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all? We look at the role of public libraries in the field of preschool education, from a national perspective. Promoting reading among children and preventive strategies against literacy deficiencies at a later age in life have always been an important policy goal for public libraries in the Netherlands.

One of the most important educational programs pursued by this goal is Boekstart (Bookstart). In this program young children (0-4 years), parents and professionals are offered a stimulating reading environment, access to books, training and coaching in libraries as well as at home and in health care centers.

The purpose of this program - stimulating literacy and giving young children a better start in primary school - shows a clear match with SDG4, especially if we look at targets 4.2 and 4.6 which focus specifically on early childhood development and literacy. Although the connection between these targets and library services seems obvious from a substantive point of view, evidence will help support this claim.

Information about outputs, as shown in columns below, will give a first indication of the scale on which libraries make an effort. As is shown, there are many libraries that provide services in the field of preschool education. And a large number of children and parents are reached by these services. This might indicate a big contribution to SDG4. The third column adds evidential value to this, by presenting research findings on the impacts of the early literacy programs. These show the positive changes that are brought about by the programs in terms of reading promotion and language skills.

Connection between SDG targets and library outputs and outcomes
Comparing library performance indicators identified by impact studies with SDG indicators is a difficult task, since it is hard to see how and to what extent they contribute to the attainment of goals. Nevertheless, sometimes data is therefore already at hand- or not so difficult to produce or to develop. It can often be very useful to change the way in which they are highlighted to reveal other realities in libraries.

First example at the departmental library of Val-d'Oise (a semi-rural department of more than 100 towns or villages near Paris and almost 130 libraries).

A study carried out in 2019 by librarians with no specific budget made it possible to enumerate user visits in all the libraries of the territory over one week.

After reckoning and result extrapolation, it was easy to demonstrate that public libraries in the Val-d'Oise territory address an audience 33 times bigger than the famous Stade-de-France in Saint-Denis! This study also demonstrates that the most important variable to explain high attendance rates in libraries is the size of the libraries themselves, not the size or the types of populations: a supply effect somehow. The idea that libraries may be as popular as football was useful in communicating with elected officials and save library internal budgets.

In 2016, another study in the same department gave the opportunity to list every library expenditure of the department to prove that libraries are real economic players. The purchasing of books, office supplies, remuneration of guest artists implemented by librarians with public money are sometimes invested on economic players established within the Val d'Oise department.
Libraries do cost money, but they also provide value to be spent on the territory and for the territory.

Second example at the Bibliothèque publique d’information (BPI, Centre Pompidou) in Paris

BPI attendance dropped by 30% from 2000 to 2018 in terms of numbers of visits. An attendance curve is a difficult result to communicate with our administrative watchdogs (Ministry of Culture, Court of auditors, etc.). To reverse this uncomfortable situation, the BPI now tries to highlight alternative indicators to show other kinds of impacts beyond physical visits: for instance duration of visit, occupancy rate, and visiting experience. Visits are down but their average length increased by one hour from 2000 to 2018; occupancy rate is consequently high because visits last longer; and visiting experience remains generally good despite the decline in attendance. Another change of perspective: when the total annual number of entries is crossed with visit duration, we realize that we obtained in 2018 an overall hourly visit volume relatively close to 2000 - out of all proportion to the attendance decline in raw data. As you can see, raw statistics are sometimes not enough to demonstrate library effects or impacts: figures may be counted in other ways and tell other stories - there is no lie here!

These are simple inferred data, generally available in libraries and not so difficult to produce. Sometimes it can be useful however to carry out more ambitious surveys or general interest researches; quantitative and qualitative studies as you will see.

Third example, French Ministry of Culture (DGMIC-Service du Livre et de la Lecture)

A national and barometric survey about the use of public libraries in France allows for the identification of the proportion of registered, non-registered and indirect users of public libraries over the whole adult population. Results are as follows:

- registered users decreased by half from 2005 to 2016;
- non-registered users greatly increased; and
- the indirect users rate (people who don’t visit libraries but take advantage of borrowing by others) shows that our old usual statistics based on registration were no longer sufficient to show the real effects of public libraries.

This new lightning with striking figures helped some French librarians to value their activities and to develop other kinds of projects: third places libraries, for instance, in which book borrowing is one activity among many others that do not require registration. The same national study shows that library users were the best equipped over the whole population in terms of personal computer: which shows that internet and personal access to computers do not systematically end up in deserted public libraries.

Fourth and last example, from the BPI - this time, a qualitative research (qualitative in the sense of the method, not only in the sense of the nature of data)

A qualitative research about poor people attending the BPI was led by social researchers in 2014. The research was based on field observations, mostly in-depth interviews. It identified 3 categories of “poor” users of the library where librarians and staff management only saw one generally: homeless users. The three categories are: frail people, often unnoticed by librarians / dependent people / people with mental illnesses, fairly visible and sometimes disturbing for the other users. The analysis of interviews shows that the library was used by poor people -whatever their situation- for practical reasons but also and above all for cultural or informational reasons (reading press, using computers to relax but also to stay informed, to learn things).

One of the key lessons was also that these types of users did not want to be stigmatised as “poor people” in the library, especially frail people: they just wanted to be like any other user and the library was making it possible (access is totally free without any control). Inside the BPI, poor
people managed to regain some dignity and the library appeared to be a protective institution for them. The effects of this study have not only been echoed by the press and within the professional community that seized it, but internally as well: it helped BPI staff, for instance, to justify the presence of homeless people in a famous and touristic place like the Centre Pompidou. I specify that this kind of qualitative study could not have been achieved by the means of a questionnaire: dependent users and people with mental illness don’t respond to our questionnaire surveys. I add again that we sometimes contract with academics to carry out research with their students.

The Berlin City Department for Culture and European Affairs and the European Urban Agenda, action 13: Raise awareness for public libraries and their new tasks on a European and National Level

By Laura Seifert
(German Library Association)

The Berlin City Department for Culture and European Affairs initiated in the framework of the European Urban Agenda and the ambitious partnership for culture and cultural heritage an important action for more visibility of public libraries. A public consultation was widely promoted by EBLIDA and its members asking to support an action which foresees an analysis for financial funding for libraries and a visibility campaign highlighting European public libraries as “third spaces”.

In September more than 26 contributions from 11 countries were submitted and turned this initiative into a great success. During the 18th European Week of Regions and Cities the Partnership will present its milestone result – the Action Plan – containing key measures that will deliver specific proposals for Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge. You can join the session online on 14th October 2020.

Join the session: https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/programme/sessions/1601_en


EBLIDA Matrix – European Union SDG policies / indicators and library policies for SDGs 16 and 17

We continue our reviews of SDGs.

Previous newsletters have dealt with SDGs 1 and 2 (September 2019 Newsletter), SDGs 3 and 4.
Focus on SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

The EU has significantly contributed to the shaping of the 2030 Agenda by showing constant commitment to sustainability, both collectively and through the individual action of its Member States. In the long and intense work which led to the formulation of the SDGs, several “Group of Friends” were created at the UN to promote the inclusion of particularly important issues in the new global Agenda. These Groups were “lobbying” - in the most noble sense of the word - to raise the attention and the commitment of the international community. One of the areas where these Group of Friends strongly focused led to the inclusion of SDG 16.

SDG 16 targets are quite heterogenous. Two of them (16.1 and 16.2) are related to the reduction of violence and the end of abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. The rule of law (Target 16.3) is promoted together with reduction of illicit financial and arms flows (16.4), corruption and bribery (16.5), while accountable and transparent institutions can be realised only through representative decision-making at all levels (16.6 and 16.7). While the provision of legal identity for all and participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance (16.8 and 16.9) seem to be reserved for non European countries, target 16.10 “Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements” is a target which seems especially designed for libraries.

The official UN Agenda includes 22 indicators valid to measure the progress of SDG 16. This number is cut by more than half when we refer to the European implementation of SDGs. This is due to the fact that in many respects some of these goals do not apply in Europe. For instance, the provision of legal identity (16.8) is a non-issue for Europe. Therefore, Eurostat indicators mainly relate to the reduction or the containment of violence and include the “Death rate due to homicide”, the “number of reported cases of crime, violence or vandalism”, “government expenditure on law courts and perceived independence of the justice system” and of corruption, as well as confidence in EU institutions. Supplementary indicators complementing the monitoring of this goal are the physical and sexual violence to women (also common to SDG 5).

How can European libraries be relevant in the Europe 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

Focus on SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

SDGs 17 represents the evolution of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), which preceded the current SDG programme. Partnerships established within SDG 17 hinge on the traditional philosophy of international development, which focuses mostly on economic growth, where States with a high national income are supposed to support the development of more
Assistance is provided in terms of resource mobilisation with the achievement of the target of 0.7 per cent and 0.20 per cent of the budget of Official Development Assistance in relation to Gross National Income, respectively, to developing countries and to least developed countries. Other targets concern the implementation of long-term debt sustainability and investment promotion regimes for least developed countries and international cooperation on technology and capacity building. Some systemic issues, such as policy and institutional coherence, multi-stakeholder partnerships data monitoring and accountability, are also taken into account within SDG 17.

The progress of SDG 17 is measured through indicators concerning official development assistance as a share of gross national income, EU financing to developing countries, EU imports from developing countries, gross government debt and shares of environmental and labour taxes in total tax revenues.

_How can European libraries be relevant in the Europe 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?_

**EU Programmes include the Enlargement Package Strategy, EU Aid Volunteers Skills and educational training, traditional programmes of International Cooperation and Development in its different aspects, also including Sustainable and responsible supply chains, climate change, disaster risk reduction and desertification, human dignity, the European Development policy, private sector development, European Research Area.**

Halfway between a humanitarian NGO and a social enterprise, Bibliothèques sans Frontières helps local and national governments diffuse knowledge where it is most needed. In spite of being excellent places for personal growth and collective development, libraries are too often absent where they could have the most impact. BsF works in 50 countries across the globe on issues such as education, health, employment, citizenship, environment and sustainability, disability, and technology.

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**Generation Code: Born at the library 2020**

13th and 14th of October

Public Libraries 2030 is hosting its annual flagship event, Generation Code: Born at the Library online this year!

This exhibition showcases all the top innovative digital exhibits from public libraries across Europe.

**The theme for this year’s Generation Code: Born at the Library is digital education and digital societies.**

The virtual exhibition prepared by PL2030 will reflect all the work that libraries do in these fields. This will be accompanied by a variety of online sessions.

Check out the [programme](#) and make sure to join in on October 13 and 14!
As always Generation Code is a time to celebrate libraries, if you’d like to post about Generation Code on social made, please use #GenerationCode so that PL2030 can see your post and have them up on the website.

We do hope to see many of you join Generation Code!

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**About the Newsletter**

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**Editors:** Unless otherwise specified, all articles are written by the [EBLIDA Secretariat](mailto:EBLIDA.Secretariat@eblida.org).

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**Events and Dates**

**October 2020**

**October 13**  
**EBLIDA Online Workshop 2020: “Think the Unthinkable” (no. 1)**  
**Place:** Online event  
**Organizer:** EBLIDA

**October 13-14**  
**Generation Code: Born at the library 2020**  
**Place:** Online event  
**Organizer:** Public Libraries 2030
October 14
Culture & Cultural Heritage has driving factors for the sustainable urban development. The dedicated Action Plan of the Urban Agenda Partnership
Place: Online event
Organizer: EU

October 14-18
Frankfurter Buchmesse – Special Edition 2020
Place: Frankfurt, Germany & Digital Fair
Organizer: Organizing Committee

October 16
EBLIDA Online Workshop 2020: “Think the Unthinkable” (no.3)
Registration: https://www.anymeeting.com/AccountManager/RegEv.aspx?
PIID=EF54D883864730
Place: Online event
Organizer: EBLIDA

October 22-25
Helsinki Book Fair
Place: Digital Fair
Organizer: Organizing Committee

October 22-26
24th International Krakow International Book Fair
Place: Krakow, Poland
Organizer: Targi w Krakowie

October 24-31
Global Media and Information Literacy Week: Resisting Disinfodemic: Media and Information Literacy for everyone and, by everyone
Place: Online event
Organizer: UNESCO and GAPMIL

October 28
28th EBLIDA Annual Council Meeting
Place: Online event for EBLIDA Members exclusively
Organizer: EBLIDA
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