A DESIGNERLY APPROACH TOWARDS INNOVATING PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, the public library emerged as an institution founded on a democratic way of thinking. It aimed to provide free access to information through various forms of media, and bridge the gap between the different social statuses in the Danish society. However, with a constant societal transformation and development of information technology the role of the public library and the usage of its physical space is continually changing. The main aim of this research is to develop an understanding of and highlight the challenges that are facing the public library in reaching younger people. Our research has adopted a qualitative approach, which generated a diversity of empirical materials. This enabled us to investigate the relationship between young people and public libraries, and thus gain insights about the taken for granted assumptions about the public library practice in Denmark. The study showed findings indicating that adolescents relate negatively to the public library and provided an interesting opportunity to explore future possible design directions that e.g. involve strategic partnerships and pop-up libraries.

INTRODUCTION

By tracing the emergence of library practice in Denmark, it is found that since its origin in Copenhagen in the late 1800s it was conceptualized as a static physical space that was linked to the rise of democratic thinking (Duelund 1995). The public library is built upon the individual's right to knowledge and information, regardless of their social status and/or economical situation. Additionally, it initially aimed to foster democratic thinking by influencing and educating a large working class that supported society (ibid). This still plays a big role in the librarians' practices; however, in our research we found that some people respond negatively to that. As an institution the public library has the responsibility of ensuring that every citizen is allowed to request any publically available knowledge, and the aim is therefore primarily to foster information, education and cultural activity by making books and other suitable materials available for the general public (Duelund 1995). According to the library law (Danish National Library Authority, 2001) in Denmark the main requirement is that the materials displayed should be of high quality, as well as stay versatile and relevant. In former times, this was people's primary source of knowledge and thereby played an important role in the development of the individual; however, with time this perception of the library has changed.

In a modern society that is increasingly accepting the use of electronic services and web-based information sources, the public library is given a new identity. The libraries are in a slightly democratic way forced to have a more flexible communication system and work organization, as well as base their service development on quality and a user-oriented approach (Singh and Nazim 2008). This is one of the reasons why the public library is in need of some drastic changes that could help it fit into a society in constant transformation.

As a result of the development of information technologies, the public library in Denmark has met major challenges in trying to reach a wide diversity of

people. Stated by the management at Odense Central Library (DK), their main challenge is that young adults in general use the public library facilities too little. Previous studies have reported that young people frequently use the library's digital offers, but are not very enthusiastic when it comes to using the physical space (Biblioteksforeningen 2011). This provides an insight into how young adults mainly access their information, as well as an understanding of the fact that the physical space should offer them something that is not accessible through an online platform. As young people have a diversity of interest fields, the librarians are also challenged in what they should offer them.

Under these terms, a qualitative research approach connecting adolescents with the future public library is important for the institution in order to stay relevant in a society undergoing transformation in the public sector. At the University of Rochester (Alvarez et al. 2007), the library employees have in collaboration with the students on campus conducted a project exploring the students' usage of the academic library facilities. What they discovered was that the students live on a "night owl" schedule, and approach the library long after opening hours have ended. The librarians' co-design approach is interesting, as it enabled them to get insights into when and why young students choose the library as a physical space, as well as when and why they choose to work elsewhere. In our research we aim to shift the focus towards young people in general, rather than young university students. This gives a more holistic view of young people's relation to the library practice, and the challenges related to that.

Over time the librarians' roles have changed significantly due to their profession becoming more liberal-minded in respect to conveying literature to the library users. Previously, the librarian's role was based on a hierarchal difference between the librarian and the loaner. Here, the educated librarians were experts in literature and had the authority to determine whether the books were useful or not (Bibliotekarforbundet 2013). Today, their role has changed to being equal with the library users, and contains tasks such as promoting exhibitions, planning and participating in projects etc., since the library users have become more demanding, and more aware of what they want. Seen from the librarians' perspective, this new approach is more fun and more engaging than the traditional one, as their identity reflects personal dialogue with the users. Additionally, they immediately receive personal confirmation when doing a good job (ibid). This could be influenced by how the librarians perceive their roles within the organization, as well as how others perceive and relate to them. Related to the complexity thinking theory, the 'me' is one's perception of one's feeling towards the configuration of how others respond to one as a subject, or an 'I' (Stacey 2011). This could show how young adults relate to the librarians, as their perception is different from how the librarians see

themselves. From the workshop conducted as part of this research, it was proven that the librarians believe their strength lies in providing users with service and information, whereas the young peoples' interpretation of them is 'grumpy librarians', who make them feel unwelcome within the library facilities. Seen in this light, the librarians perceive themselves in the 'I' as an approaching and helpful service, whereas the younger segment (the 'me'), perceive them differently. Therefore, we argue that the librarians' perception of their own role and actions is important for the organization as a whole, if their aim is to change young people's relation to the public library.

The public library's challenge of reaching the young adults and thereby attract them to the physical library space is therefore influenced by various factors. We argue that in order to do so, the young people's relation to and image of the library needs to be changed. However, this concern also relates to how the librarians' roles might be altered in the future according to the changes that the public library might undergo.

As our role as designers is changing, it has become a fact that the user-centred design approach cannot address the complexity of challenges we face today (Sanders and Stappers 2008), as we no longer design products for users, but rather for future experiences, communities and cultures. Looking to fulfill a need of more people, the landscape is changing towards human-centred design research emphasizing various stakeholders in a broader contextual setting (Zhang and Dong 2009). This research was therefore approached with a participatory design mindset in respect to understanding the different stakeholders' relation and perception of the public library in Denmark.

This paper seeks to identify alternative ways in which librarians and library management can offer services aimed at young people, and reach out to them in more efficient ways. The first part of the paper will provide insights into the empirical data collected throughout our research. The second part will discuss possible exploratory solutions for library services, followed by a discussion and finally a conclusion.

METHODOLOGY
This research has been guided by a qualitative tradition, and founded on a participatory design approach (Brandt et al. 2012). Within this landscape we focus on both envisioning an improved future, as well as ask critical questions about the current public library practices (Mattelmäki & Visser 2011). Our research is based on a wish to make tools and techniques of participation relevant to the participatory actions we are involved in, which is why we have shaped our methods according to the aim and expected outcome of involving the specific group of people. The data was collected through a workshop with youngsters, a focus-group interview with librarians and a semi-structured interview with a

researcher within librarianship. These methods are further described in the subsequent sections.

The framework of analysis has been develop on the foundation of the Straussian Grounded Theory method (Niekerk and Roode 2009), and has focused on opening up dialogue about the data, ask questions about it, and verify the answers one gives through the collected material itself. Having coded the empirical data we focused on breaking down findings into categories, whereupon it was possible to group them into more abstract themes and draw conclusions from those.

EMPIRICAL MATERIAL

The following section presents fieldwork, which has been conducted across multiple sites to give a wider understanding of the unique positioning of young people, librarians and a researcher within the field of librarianship, and to do cross-comparisons between the empirical findings from engaging with each of these three groupings of people. We organised one workshop, which involved high school students, and a focus-group interview engaging five librarians. Additionally, we conducted a semi-structured interview with a researcher within librarianship. The approach and the actual involvement of these participants will be presented in the following sections.

ESTABLISHING CONTACT

In order to verify the challenge stated by the library management we, the authors, were invited to facilitate a workshop with adolescents in the ages between 15-21, arranged by the library. The library had taken the responsibility to find participants and within one month, only two people had signed up, whereas one person confirmed. They had approached the young adults through the library's Facebook page, and some had shown interest, but had not signed up. Following, they tried convincing them to participate by offering cinema tickets, as well as contacted local schools in order to get the invitation published on the schools' internal webpages. As the approach failed the workshop was cancelled.

Since we were interested in gaining insights into the young adults' use of the public library, we decided to take the task in our own hands, and started planning the next attempt. As we were restricted by time to deliver data, we decided to visit a high school to reach the adolescents in a place we knew they would be within. Through personal invitations in their common area, we succeeded in establishing contact to them. When comparing the two attempts, a difference in our approaches was found. The librarians approached the adolescents through their own platform (Facebook page), which is where their existing users are. We believe their approach failed here, as they tried to reach the young people from the library's own Facebook page, which very few people have subscribed to. The way, in which the librarians approached the adolescents, also showed that they expected the users to approach them through Facebook solely. By visiting the adolescents within their own territory it was effectively possible to reach them and establish contact easily. This might also relate to the original role of librarians, where library users approach them for help.

Following, we had a discussion with the library management about how to approach young people. The library employees believed that our younger age had a significant influence in this matter. It was therefore discussed whether a young-to-young approach would work better in respect to attracting young people to the public library space.

As the librarians and we, design researchers, have different perceptions of and relations to the public library this also influences our different approaches. We believe that the actions of the students at the school derived from our way of approaching them. Stacey (2011) discusses Mead's term 'conversation of gestures': *"Instead he thought of one body making a gesture to another body where the gesture calls out, or evokes, a response from that other body. That response is itself a gesture back to the first body which, in turn, evokes a further response"* (Stacey 2011:331). This was how we experienced the outcome from our personal invitations. The gestures we received from the adolescents were in this case their participation, which evoked the gesture we had called out. This helped conclude that our approach was successful. We argue that the gesture they showed us was a step towards reaching this user group, even though there is a long way from talking with them, and them showing an interest, to having them physically visit to the public library space. This finding in our research indicates that in a longer term the librarians could potentially make the young people feel more interested in the activities and offers of the public library. However, this means that the librarians need to reach the younger people in person, and through gestures enhance their interest in the public library. The main issue here is that the librarians are perceived as people, who want to educate and raise the population, and that scares the youngsters away. This is exactly why the librarians often are cautious, as they do not want to force something on anyone. However, findings show that it will not seem as a negative gesture, if the approach is accommodated to fit the context and the people within it.

ENGAGING WITH YOUNG ADULTS

The workshop conducted at the high school consisted of two activities: questions, which needed to be answered on post-its and a two-questioned interview. The purpose was to gain insights into the adolescents' use of the public library as well as their general interests.

From the results of the workshop we found that the communication between the youngsters and the public library is extremely weak. Many of the students suggested offers, which already exist within the library practice. This proves that they do not know about the library services and activities. One girl said: *"there*

might be some offers that I just do not know about, but could be interested in". Even though we could inform them about these things, their excitement in accepting the library's offers was not existent, due to the way in which they perceive and relate to this public institution. One of the adolescents articulated: *"my friends and I perceive the library as being a boring place with old people, grumpy librarians, books and homework".* This is a central finding made from our interviews, since multiple youngsters provided us with a clear understanding of the fact that they only use the library services when they really need it, as they do not feel that it is a place they are welcome. The youngsters likewise articulated that most information they need could be accessed through their academic library.

When we asked about the future library and what potentially could attract them to become users of it they spoke of a need for a physical space, in which they would have the possibility of interacting socially with other people or do homework collaboratively with their friends. However, since they see the library, as a space in which they are ought to be silent and respective of other people's needs, the library does not suit their own needs at this point in time. This finding can be supported by a comment from one of the students saying: *"the library is a quiet place with old people, and I'm actually not sure what I would do there".*

These findings provided us with an insight into the library's challenge in attracting young people to their public space, as it showed that the way they relate to the library is the central issue. If we look at this challenge in the context of what Mead (1967) calls the *social object*, people have different interpretations of what the library's physical space has to offer. Stacey (2011:381) states: *"There are, therefore, many social objects, many generalized tendencies by large numbers of people to act in similar ways in similar situations."* This is relatable to how various users have different interpretations of what the social object is. If the adolescents' interpretation of the library is boring compared to regular users, who might find the offers and facilities attractive, how would it then be possible to change the adolescents' perception of the social object, and is it even possible?

ENGAGING WITH LIBRARIANS
For a broader institutional and contextual understanding of the public library, a focus-group interview was conducted with five librarians, each with different experiences and educational backgrounds. The aim of the gathering was also to enable the librarians to articulate the most important elements within the library practice, so that it would help us in proposing possible innovative solutions to the challenges they are facing in keeping these elements relevant. Utilizing the focus-group interview method (Morgan 1997) the librarians stimulated and triggered each other to discuss their experiences, which then created the foundation of their arguments. Together they developed a common

language to share ideas as well as bring forth memories, and they eventually came up with six different themes that they found essential in respect to maintaining the relevancy of the public library in a modern and digitalized society. They called the first one 'niche domain', and they find it important because they want to give people the chance to explore their hobbies within the library space, and thereby attract a wider group of users. The second one is called 'knowledge dissemination' and focuses on still giving the general public the chance to search for information and gain new knowledge at the library. The third category is called 'social space', and is included, as the librarians would like to have people use the public library as a space in which people can hang out and socialize across generations. The fourth category is 'materials', and although the libraries already focus much on providing materials of high quality, they still believe it is an important part of the future. To attract mostly younger people to the library they believe that activity, which is the fifth category, will be an important challenge of the future. The librarians emphasize that they should aim for offering activities that people can learn from, as well as have fun with. One of the librarians said: *"I am tired of organizing activities, and end up having to call schools to beg their students to attend. We need to work on becoming better at reaching these youngsters, and organise events they actually think are interesting".* This articulation shows part of the challenge that the librarians are facing in reaching younger people. The last category that they think they are still not very good at fulfilling is what they call 'digital dojo'. They want to develop room for teaching people, and especially young ones, to stay safe online and generally to prepare them for navigating within online communities. The six themes the librarians defined are, thus, what they found most important to focus on in the future for the library to stay essential in the Danish society. Conducting this focus-group interview helped us in creating an overview of the library practice, an understanding of the challenges of the public library, as well as insights into the requests the librarians themselves believe they are good at meeting.

GAINING EXPERT INSIGHTS
To gain a better understanding of the public library challenges a semi-structured interview was conducted involving a researcher within the field of librarianship. During our dialogue Assistant Professor Skøtt is asked about his perspective on young people and their lack of public library visits. He basically explained that each human being most likely would visit the library at some point in his/her life; it is just a matter of priority. As a child, you usually go with your parents. However, when growing older and moving into your teenage-years, you have many other things on your mind: friends, school, fun, activities, relationships etc., and that affects your priorities. In this matter, the library is no longer an important part of your life at that time. He thinks that libraries cannot compete with these other influential

factors, and that some people return to the library once they have kids themselves. This is what is referred to as the library 'food chain'. Skøtt continues to consider current usages of libraries, as he expresses that people's library usage very much depends on their social status, work, life situations, education etc.—going from being single to being in a relationship, switching jobs, having kids. All these factors influence your way of using or not using the public library, as your priorities change depending on your situation.

As we discuss other challenges that the public library has faced since its origin Skøtt articulates that the primary challenge is related to the digitalization of information and literature. Younger people are increasingly being drawn towards the digital libraries, along with other various sources of information online. The adolescents who attend higher educations at universities etc. are also more likely to make use of the libraries at the institutions, rather than the public ones. Therefore, to build on top of Skøtt's arguments we propose that to maintain some sort of activity within the physical public library space, there is a need for alternate ways of attracting different target groups, and offer services that cannot be utilized online.

COMPARISON

Having conducted fieldwork with librarians, adolescents and an expert it is now possible to do a cross-comparison between their individual perceptions of the public library, and identify the points in which problems or differences emerge.

The first issue appears as the librarians define six different themes they believe are essential for the library practice to exist. These themes are not exactly what the young people associate the public library with, and this is where the first challenges seem to emerge. One very important difference is that the librarians want the public library to be used as a social space, in which different groupings of people, and especially young people, can casually spend time together. This clearly contradicts with the responses of the young people we involved in the research, since they perceive the public library as a space, within which they are ought to be reading books quietly. These issues emerge from a gap between the two parties in respect to communication. The example previously mentioned in terms of the librarians reaching out to adolescents through their own Facebook page proves that there is a lack of communication between the younger population in society and the public library. This means that the gap is widened as a result of bad communication and an antiquated image of the library concept. In the same sense, the adolescents perceive the library as being boring, and although the librarians are trying to arrange activities related to current societal themes that might attract younger people, this image is not exactly in their favour.

As Skøtt articulated another important aspect of the emergent issue is that young people are involved in many things at this stage of their lives, whether it being education, relationships, sports etc., and these affect their priorities and thereby their lack of visits to the public library space. The challenges that the public library is facing are thus related to a lack of younger visitors, methods to engage and reach them, as well as a lack of insight into what offers young people would be attracted to. Potential future solutions to these challenges are what the subsequent section is about to explore.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

For us, as researchers and designers, to help librarians move towards some sort of action this section will propose suggestions that could potentially inspire librarians towards innovating their practice and the public library offers. This research proposes a necessity to start re-thinking the original library concept, and to imagine the library practice in new and different contexts. This is important to consider, as the library is a public institution and should invite a wide range of people with different social and economical backgrounds. On one hand, the public library's role is to provide free access to knowledge for the general public, but when looking deeper into what kind of meaning lies behind this original concept, it is found that the public library deals with more than that; while this public organisation helps society develop intellectually, it additionally seeks to embrace the notion of social inclusiveness. And for everyone to be socially included in society, the existence of a shared identity is necessary. In this matter, a high degree of participation and involvement in a community is a central issue (Aabø 2005) when seeking to innovate the public library.

This means that when designing for the public, it is very significant to keep in mind that different groupings of people need to be involved and have a say, so that no minority lags behind, widening the gap in society. One of the aspects, which have already affected this community feeling, is the digital world. As less people are making use of the library as a physical space, more people are engaging with digital materials and connecting with others online. As Aabø (2005) expresses, this movement results in a decreasing community involvement, as people do not physically face or interact with a diversity of people from different cultures or social and educational backgrounds. The public library thereby needs to increase its attention towards the development of services and library activities that focus on social inclusiveness. However, this is evidently not a simple task, and so for the public library to stay relevant, there is a need for an extra effort that could make it more interesting to a wider group of people. Some ideas for change will thereby be presented in the following section.

CO-DESIGNED LIBRARY SPACES

Many libraries in Denmark have already taken the initiative to look at possible solutions for attracting

young people to their facilities. Example given, the library in Kolding (DK) has successfully in their basement created a space called 'Underground Library Kolding' (Kolding Bibliotek 2014), which is meant as a platform for the local adolescents' activities and creativities. This physical offer is facilitated by the librarians, but is always accessible for the young people within the opening hours. As design researchers interested in Participatory Design methods, we suggest that creating a physical space in collaboration with the young adults will trigger them to feel ownership towards the space, which potentially can lead to attract a broader audience within the young user group. Therefore, by involving young people in the process of designing such spaces, they can contribute with their personal interests in order to make it attractive for their own age group.

A co-designed library space can simply be defined as a place, in which both librarians and young people can generate ideas for activities in a collaborative manner; a space in which collaborative creativity can add on top of individual reflection. As found from the outcome of our workshop with the young adults, their perception of the physical library space is currently the biggest challenge of this public institution. In order to overcome this, we suggest that it might beneficial for the co-designed spaces to be separate spaces e.g. within the physical library, around town (pop-up library) or in various social contexts. If the co-designed space is flexible, it could be presented in other places, and the young people could visit events such as festivals, sports events etc. Here, they will have the opportunity to present the results of their collaborative work, and have other young people participate in activities they generated in their co-designed space. This space does not necessarily have to be facilitated by librarians, but should be supported by the library. We argue that it is important to give the young people freedom to explore ideas and give them ownership of the public library spaces. A co-designed facility for young people could potentially attract a user group to share knowledge and experiences, although with a large diversity of interests. This could be in terms of homework, friendship, networking, and cultural or scientific activities. Nevertheless, as we found from the workshop conducted, the approach to attract them has a huge impact on their attendance. As discussed with the management at Odense Central Library, a young-to-young approach might work. In this sense, the library could employ ambassadors to convey the library offers to other adolescents, in the hope of giving the library a more attractive image.

DEVELOPING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS
One thing that could be done is to look beyond the boundaries of the library and reach out to other organizations that might be helpful in making the public library services more interesting and attractive. There is a growing tendency towards building strategic partnerships between multiple public libraries. The central libraries in Aarhus and Roskilde in Denmark

have already initiated a collaboration for the ultimate purpose of innovating the public library through a partnership that helps develop new initiatives, solve problems and function as a central tool for the fulfilment of their individual visionary goals. The aim is that these partnerships instigate a win-win situation, and that they are built upon equality. In this case, both organizations are located within the public sector. However, instigating strategic partnerships across the private and public sector could contribute towards the creation of a wider competence space and challenge familiar working procedures, thereby constructing a foundation for innovation both in terms of institutional organization and in library practices. The managements of the different libraries we have been at are beginning to see this way of working as a strategic intellectual move. They wish to encourage their librarians to think and act across the organization and trigger their interest in future potential that may be very different from what the library represents now. At the same time they wish to see the public library as a more dynamic space that develops between people, public institutions and private organizations. With specific reference to private-public partnerships, we argue that this could be a way to help the public library solve challenging tasks, as well as enable them to see the library in new and different perspectives. In this matter, strategic partnerships also contribute with new competences that can help enhance the library offers. Nevertheless, it is not enough to agree that external stakeholders can help increase the number of library visitors or make the public library more attractive. It is, as West and Bogers (2013) state, important to efficiently be capable of recognizing the value of external sources of innovation. Therefore, we argue that the public library will not benefit from randomly involving public or private organizations without being fully aware of their purpose and goal of the cooperation.

In relation to the above-written it is important that the library management becomes clearer in their argumentation of their goal and the purpose of involving external partners. If not, it might create confusion about the library's identity within the institution. Nevertheless, the involvement of external companies or other libraries could potentially increase their ability to cultivate interesting offers, projects, etc., within the library practice. It might also increase the interest of the general public if larger companies with a solid foothold in the field get involved. In this sense, the library management could raise the stakes in terms of external involvement as one form of intensive effort to increase the attractiveness of the public library, as well as target a wider group of people.

DISCUSSION
The main argument of this research is that the public library in Denmark needs to become better at involving people in various activities that may help them come up with ideas for change within library practices and thus

enter into a dialogue with the general public, so that the physical space becomes much more engaged with the citizens. This relates to DiSalvo's idea of publics, as he states that design within publics does not necessarily have to be action-oriented or create social or political change at a beginning stage, but rather provide the means to take action and bring attention to the necessity of thorough research, since that also is an important part of designing within public organisations (DiSalvo 2009). By involving people in these kinds of activities, the library could create a community that contributes to a discussion relating to the future public library's potential and assist library management in the re-framing of the original library concept so that it fits into the present, whereby on-going changes are part of the everyday. By doing this, the library might be able to offer different kinds of services to the local communities and thus attract a wider group of people. Importantly, these services are responsive to on-going change.

Another argument leads to the notion of how librarians see their role in the future, as the services they are ought to offer have been transforming in accordance to what society needs from them. Their primary concern at this point looking towards the future might be based on the thought of whether or not the general public actually is in need of a physical library space, since information simply is becoming effortlessly accessible through various forms of technology. In this sense, the local communities' need for a physical static library might be decreasing. Based on this assumption the librarians' profession appears to be in danger if society no longer needs this institution for accessing information and developing intellectually. This is also one of the reasons why the Central Library in Odense (DK) is starting to challenge their own assumptions, and seeks to reach out to young people in different ways. It is important for them to take action at this point in order to maintain their role within the physical library, as well as its offers. It could also mean that the public library in Denmark needs to take on other public services in their facilities. In Aarhus (DK) they have merged the citizen service with the library, which also means that the role of librarians have been re-conceptualized to provide other services to the citizens (Danmarks biblioteker 2011). Even though the services are still separated in the facilities, the library's concept has been changed in order to fit the municipality, and the challenges some citizens face in dealing with public matters, such as getting passports, changing addresses etc. Although that is one clear way of merging public services it is not something that could attract young people to a greater degree. As stated in the empirical data, young people's relation to the library and the librarians plays an important role in regard to their use of the library offers. We argue that this relation needs to change, if the librarians want to attract youngsters. As suggested, a co-designed flexible facility might help establish a better communication and relationship between the adolescents and the librarians. Either way, the offers

need to be relevant to younger people's interests and provide opportunities for them to expand their horizons.

Importantly, these two arguments are responsive to on-going change, and exactly that we state is a significant part of re-conceptualizing the public library. Here, we align with Ingold and Gatt (2013), who remind us that our lives are in constant movement, and that it requires design to move along at the same pace in order for a relationship built on correspondence to appear. They state that, if our ancestors were able to design something perfectly and if they had specified an end-point, there would be no need for us to go through this much trouble to come up with new designs. Ingold and Gatt (ibid) thereby argue that if design tries to bring predictability and foreclosure to a life process, design would be killing the world's natural process. If the public library had already been designed in a perfect manner, life would be static, and the young people would solely be users of what was already designed for them. The purpose is to move *alongly* with the development of life, and the challenges that continuously will face the public library. In so doing librarians should recognize the importance of understanding what the temporal aspects of design and life mean for their practices. With design, we always try to come up with the ultimate perfect answer, but there is no such thing; there will always be room for improvement. As previously mentioned, in some libraries they are actively trying to do new things, however, there are some political and economical challenges to deal with, as well as differences in the sizes of the organizations and thereby also the extent to which they can handle such big changes/projects. In this concern, we are thereby not transforming the world by doing this kind of research; rather are we inviting the librarians to become part of society's transformation itself, which corresponds to the changes happening within it, whether it being in a small or a large scale. In this sense, we cannot afford to be afraid of not knowing the end-point. Design is always in pursuit of something unknown, and for the public library to stay relevant, it needs to stay up-front and involve people in the process of designing alternate library futures.

Although an important aspect to remember is that people's use of the public library changes over time depending on their age, occupation etc., it is still relevant to put immense effort into attracting young people at this stage to make sure that they know about the library and its offers. On this basis, this paper argues that there is a need for action at this point to avoid that more challenging issues will emerge with time.

CONCLUSIONS
This research set out to determine adolescents' use of the public library's physical space at several libraries in Denmark. The paper has shown and argued that the gap between young people and the public library is continually widening, as a result of the emergence of the digital library as well as other information technologies. Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this

study, we state that in order to attract young people to the library space in the future the librarians' approach to reaching the younger segment needs to be re-conceptualized. In this sense, there is a need for the librarians to involve and engage with adolescents in forming the library offers. In so doing the librarians could empower the adolescents, and thereby allow them to take ownership of the services offered by the library in the future.

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this research is that the difference between the librarians' and the adolescents' perception of the public library is huge. While the librarians believe that the physical library space is inviting and that their nature is accommodating towards the library users, the young people relate to the library as a place, in which they feel unwelcome and uncomfortable. We argue that young people's perception of the public library image needs to undergo radical changes in order to attract adolescents to the physical library space. It is thus suggested that library management consider how they could represent their institution in various contexts, e.g. festivals, public events etc. or even build strategic partnerships with other public or private organisations. However, there still needs to be a strong emphasis on the aim of the partnership, so that the identity of the library does not vanish completely.

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