EUROPEISKA UNIONEN
Europeiska socialfonden

The interlingual library

– a project within the European Social Fund

To see possibilities

- We all live in multicultural and multilingual societies
- It is up to us to see possibilities and the riches this can offer instead of just focusing on problems

The library is the place

- We don’t have to create new places to meet
- We can develop what already is there in all municipalities - libraries
- Many immigrants have already made their choice – the library
- Immigrants need the library

The IFLA Multicultural Library Manifesto

- *- Each individual in our global society has the right to a full range of library and information services, which should be provided in appropriate languages and scripts;*
- *- give access to a broad range of materials and services reflecting all communities.*
- *- Special attention should be paid to minorities, asylum seekers and refugees, residents with a temporary residence permit, migrant workers, and indigenous communities*

Libraries - an arena of manifoldness

- The library as an arena for knowledge and experience is one of the most important institutions to keep a “multicultural” reality together
- The library gives the possibility to develop more of an intercultural structure

Two ideas about the future:

1. **The commercial library**

- To accept and adjust to the Market
- The library becomes like a bookshop where you don’t have to pay

Two ideas about the future:

2. ”**Community librarianship**”,

- to adapt services to those who live or work in an area
- take an active part in local social development
- implies analyzes and knowledge of the local community
- continuing dialogue both with users and politicians

The dilemma of libraries

- Less money while the number of languages spoken is increasing
- A multilingual library costs more
- It is necessary to make priorities
- “Many” can be in conflict with “all”

Two major challenges

1) Languages

- Knowing more than one language is an asset for the individual and a wealth for the community, locally as well as globally
- Written language is more complicated, more theoretical than everyday speech
- What is needed is continual encouragement and development of both the mother tongue and the Swedish language

Two major challenges

2) The digital divide

- One and a half million of the inhabitants in Sweden are believed not to be able to access ITC-society. Many have come to Sweden as adults.
- Internet provides great possibilities if you want to remain in contact and communicate with your former homeland and its language and culture
- If you don’t have knowledge or access to a computer you are referred to the library

The necessity to reach out

- Individuals with language-troubles and lack of ITC-knowledge often have also a low level of education and are generally not library-users
- The library must “reach out” and meet people face to face in the real world

The project

The most successful methods:

- *Dare press*—easy ICT-courses
- *Language cafés* – languages training with structured conversation;
- *Life-long- learning*—support desks
- *Homework assistance*—extra help in different subjects
- *Story telling* —in mother tongues to pre-primary school children
- *Cultural pedagogy*—using a family-learning approach to bridge ethnic gaps

The media collection

- **The core task of libraries**
- A trend in the library-world to focus more on other things than to build good media-collections

What has to be done

- The most important task is to create an awareness of the fact that Sweden has changed
- Institutions lag behind in vital aspects of their services
- Today it is no longer tenable that a sole person, a real enthusiast, can meet these challenges
- Immigrant services can no longer be seen as a project

What has to be done

"Ordinary" library services must meet these challenges

- The library has to be created as a cosmopolitan meeting place in time and space in the middle of each municipality

Conclusions

A multilingual library does cost but will be a benefit to the whole of society.

- To offer a media collection in only one language is of course cheaper than to do the same thing in twenty or more languages!
- Politicians and other decision-makers have to realize that a library that really is for the whole population is not the same as a library that is only for the majority!

To discuss

1) How can libraries contribute to local development plans? How can we contribute to a change in attitudes among library staff as well as politicians in regards to the central role played by libraries for integration and a democratic dialogue in society?

To discuss

2) How can we build libraries as a neutral but not apolitical arena for new engagements, ideas and cultural expressions?

To discuss

3) How can libraries develop their unique mandate to make media, books, newspapers and periodicals in the languages spoken in a community available and meet the needs of a community?