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	<p><i>PUBLIC LIBRARIES, SPACES FOR SOCIAL COHESION. Proximity and inclusion in the public libraries of Barcelona.</i></p> <p>Juan José Arranz Programme Director of the Libraries Consortium of Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain. jarranz@bcn.cat</p>
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1. SUMMARY.

The public libraries are facilities that work on fostering a reduction of social and cultural inequalities that are becoming more and more evident in our urban societies. It is precisely in these urban settings where the strategy of proximity is shown to be efficient in dealing with processes of inclusion, these facilities being, among other public spaces, where these inequalities are very clearly evident. Three programmes carried out in the Libraries of Barcelona will be presented that have as their main aim, among others, to overcome the cultural differences that certain social groups have made visible in our facilities through their use, as citizens who have complete rights to do so.

2. OLD AND NEW INEQUALITIES.

Social inequalities are nothing new. They have been manifested since the beginning of community life, and it can be stated that one of the motors that has made humanity advance has been precisely the fight by many agents to reduce or eliminate them.

The social order in which we live has perpetuated a conception of a world divided into rich and poor countries, developed and developing, north and south, a fact conditioned by the world division of work. However, the current definition of the economy as a global fact has accentuated further more this unequal division. Castells defines it as "informational and global economy"¹. Informational because productivity and

¹ CASTELLS, M., *La era de la información* (vol 1), Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1998, 590 p., ISBN: 84-206-4247-9.

competitiveness are rooted in the capacity of the economic agents to use information to generate wealth, and global because the planet is understood as a vast market network.

Social exclusion. Far from distancing themselves from this model, the northern societies reproduce this unequal scheme, generating even greater distances between their rich and poor, and therefore generating and greater number of excluded people. The difference that exists between structured economies and those that aren't, the distance between qualified workers and those that aren't, is getting bigger and bigger. Daily, more people are excluded from the normalised circuits of health and education, and fewer opportunities for social and political participation.

This social divide, as with all the inequalities, has an economic origin: wealth that is generated in the northern countries is not distributed evenly, in fact quite the opposite, wealth increases in the same proportion as social rights decrease.

Unfortunately the existence of excluded social sectors has gone from being conceived as a situation to beat, to being a defining fact of our society. Something that many understand already as a structural phenomenon.

Cultural Exclusion. Cultural exclusion is one more form of social exclusion. Cultural goods are becoming more and more unattainable for those, who are excluded, and cannot access sources of knowledge in a normal way. And if the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have shown their great potential for creating equality, by allowing a more generalised, universal and democratic use of these goods, they can also contribute to increasing even more the distance between them. The use of technology is still restricted, and as we will see later on, certain social groups, even though they live in developed countries, have difficulties to access these. So in this way, the cultural gap combines with technology, one feeding off the other.

Urban societies. It is a fact that our societies are heading towards a mostly urban future, leaving the rural country as something residual. This democratic concentration in the urban spaces accentuates these social inequalities, and provokes the flourishing of new differences. This phenomenon can be observed in the majority of Latin American countries, Africa and Asia, making life in the cities often difficult and deteriorated.

At the same time, and on another scale, the cities of more developed countries, receive migratory fluxes which are becoming more and more

numerous, which come from developing countries.

This process of urbanisation of our societies makes evident and boosts the existence of new inequalities.

Immigration. The north-south migratory fluxes produce cities which are becoming more and more multi-cultural. The movements before took place from the country to the city, now they take place in global terms, from the south to the north. Explained in another way, the migrations that before were inter-state, are now international. These movements are mostly produced for economic reasons, originating from the need to search for better opportunities, which come down to having a more dignified job. The major cities of the developed countries have become in this way a mosaic that gathers together in an unequal way, people from different cultures.

However different phenomenon such as the acculturation, the damage of these expectations, the lack of family ties, the lack on knowledge of the new culture, and even the refusal of certain local groups that provoke the exclusion of part of these immigrants. This situation is generating major social and political debates in western countries, above all in those countries, such as Spain, that didn't used to be the destination for immigrants.

Young and uprooting. The lack of expectations, the belonging to social and cultural environments at risk, have made youths a social group that is more and more susceptible to suffer social exclusion. The young become one of the most vulnerable social groups, and because of their reality in terms of maturity, this exclusion is seen to be more explicit, sometimes due to their clearly de-structured attitudes that leads to their searching for the attention of the adults and/or the 'normalised' population.

The elderly. The elderly have become the new forgotten people of the developed societies. The loss of family and community values present in rural settings has turned them into one of the segments most affected by exclusion. Vital experience, that once was a value, has become a burden. To this should also be added that normally they are at the expense of skills that are currently highly rated as productivity, competitiveness and immediacy. As they stop being 'productive', so the people over 65 stop being useful. A situation that contrasts with the gradual ageing of the western populations.

Digital gap. The explosion of the ICT has facilitated in an exponential way the access to information of the citizens, but it has also produced a new exclusion: a new form of discrimination that separates the rich from the poor based on just this access known as the digital gap. However we currently understand this inequality as something broader, that also

relates to the quality of the connectivity and the skills acquisition in the use of ICT. It is here that the strategy of informational literacy, something really close to the mission of the libraries, takes on strength, with this literacy being understood as the acquisition of basic skills of the users that allows them to acquire the knowledge and communication by using ICT. The digital gap can become a lost opportunity for the disadvantaged groups, for those who do not have the possibility of taking advantage of technology to improve their quality of life. All the strategies to reduce digital inequalities should approach the importance that the way in which the technology is used and the huge potential they have to improve the quality of life of those who suffer from exclusion.

This brief and perhaps schematic review about the social inequalities and the exclusions they can produce, leads us to a conclusion that although they are evident we should never forget them if we want to be successful in the fight against social and cultural differences: the digital gap is a reflection of other exclusions - economic, cultural, etc. And therefore to resolve this, we should first deal with the origins of social exclusion.

3. THE PUBLIC LIBRARY, CENTRE OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PROXIMITY.

The IFLA-UNESCO manifest for public libraries, and the IFLA manifest about Libraries: the Information Society in Action, mark the way that the libraries should follow in this the 21st century, and also to do so by defining the role that they should fulfil in the field of social cohesion: a library close and open to its environment will facilitate the processes of social inclusion by influencing in a positive way in the fight against cultural inequalities.

Culture and territory. In the case of the large urban cities, the mosaic of cultural and social realities that they represent have turned the territorial environments into strong elements of identifying processes. The territories, that normally coincide with the neighbourhoods or areas defined by historic realities, should be located in the centre of any cultural policy that seeks equal cultural opportunities. In this way, the public cultural programmes have become one of the more clearly defining elements of the territories. They have done so, using new strategies of relation with and approximation to the citizens that has brought with it a new way of understanding cultural diffusion: proximity. Taking this into account means planning the programmes in such a way that these are deeply rooted in the environment in which they are found, taking into account the needs, the community network, the agents that make it up, and open to the dynamic that they generate. In conclusion, constructing community.

Culture and social cohesion. There is no inclusion or equality without cultural policies that guarantee the universalised and democratic access to culture. More so if we take note of what was stated in the previous point: culture has become a strong identifying element that constructs collectivity and becomes a strong element of social cohesion. A progressive public policy should guarantee access to the sources of information and culture so as to be able to fight with efficacy against inequality. Within this strategy, the public library plays a fundamental role, as it is the main cultural agent of proximity in the territories. The IFLA/UNESCO manifest of 1994 defines the library as a democratic institution that ensures equality of access to culture and knowledge for everyone, irrespective of age, race, sex, religion, nationality or social class. It should also serve to "foster intercultural dialogue and favour cultural diversity". Therefore the library cannot turn its back on the new social realities, however hard they may be, and should become one more agent for the socialisation of those collectives that, although they may temporarily alter the normal functioning of the services, require it. The only way of doing so is to place it at the centre of the cultural network of the territories, close to the citizens, that is to say, in search of proximity.

The Public Library, a strategy for reducing cultural inequality.

The public libraries have shown that they are strategic centres for applying policies for reducing cultural inequalities. The public and free of charge access to the sources of information and culture make these a key element in the fight for social cohesion that the public administrations should develop in the different settings as suggested beforehand.

- In the themes related to overcoming the digital gap, facilitating connectivity and free access to ICT, offering programmes of informational literacy that provide the necessary skills to be able to cope in a normal way in these environments, all those collectives that need to do so.
- In the normalised integration of the immigrants, understood to be new citizens, using the so-called intercultural model as a way of welcoming them: the respect for diversity, and the relation between the different cultures as the most just formula, egalitarian and also enriching. The wealth and variety of the library collections are key elements: documents in the languages of the different cultures existing in the cities should be incorporated in the collections in a normal way, and activities should be programmed of cultural diffusion, and of the reading that promotes this interculturality, without falling in the trap of merely folkloric manifestations.
- Attending the collectives at risk of exclusion, taking into account their particular characteristics and needs: youths, elderly, children

in situations of social risk, immigrants, etc.

To tackle this new situation with guarantees, the libraries have for some time been undergoing a process of redefinition, both in terms of their mission and their functioning, and therefore also how to relate with their publics. The defining characteristics of these new forms of approach are the following:

- To go into greater depth the functioning on the net.
- To define what the common services are.
- To foster active attitudes of the public in the use and functioning of the library.
- To make the library a facility closely related to its environment, with the doors open to the dynamics and actions that this generates.
- To boost the social dimension of the library as a generating space of democratising processes of culture and as a meeting and socialising space for the individual action practices and cultural consumption.
- To turn the library into a dynamic space open to creation, with a diversified and quality offer that enables the participation of the public users and the different cultural agents of the territory.

In conclusion, positioning them in the nucleus of the cultural dynamics of the territories, turning them into spaces of their own as cultural centres of proximity, getting away from a model of facility aimed at students and people studying, and linked little with its surrounding environment, so that they become a live and dynamic reference of the cultural life of the territories.

The Public Library, also a space for relations and exchange. The libraries don't only facilitate access to information and culture. They have also become places where all the social groups present in the territory meet up in a common space of culture and information, and there synergies are produced and inter-relations between them, facilitating knowledge about others and a greater comprehension of these, thus normalising the differences. Being an open facility, and free of charge, the free circulation is facilitated. In the library all the citizens can share the space, and this is the first step towards improving the knowledge of those different from oneself, to grow in mutual respect and therefore to deepen the integration.

4. THREE EXAMPLES, THREE PRACTICES IN THE LIBRARIES OF BARCELONA.

Multimedia spaces.

It has already been mentioned above in this text what the advantages and dangers of ICT are. And in the different settings of the latter, about the meaning and consequences of the technological and digital gap: the appearance of new excluded people, those that don't have access to technology and the informational illiterate. And also the fundamental role that the libraries have to play so as to reduce the cultural and informational distances between social groups.

The Libraries of Barcelona, aware that this is one of the basic functions that they should carry out, set in motion in 2005 a total of 15 multimedia spaces in 15 libraries, provided with a total of 211 PCs, 15 printers, 15 scanners, 104 webcams, 104 headphones and microphones, 560 pay-per-view licenses, and 112 free programming licenses. Furthermore we increased the number of connection points to Internet in all the public libraries of the city. This action has been developed within the framework of a programme of Telecentres that the autonomous government of Catalonia is carrying out so the ICT reaches the whole of the country.

Furthermore, given that the map of libraries of the city is well under way, all the new libraries or those that exists which are being enlarged or reformed, will incorporate these spaces until the whole territory is covered with this service. In fact by the end of 2007, there will already be 19 libraries of Barcelona with multimedia spaces (60% of the municipal public network).

In this way access is facilitated for the citizens to ICT by means of the creation of a network that has connection points to Internet free of charge, while at the same time allowing the carrying out of the tasks of diffusion, training and creation. These spaces are of free access to the users who have a library card (the cards are free). The functioning can be in the form of self-access or by means of the help of training and diffusion courses which are offered. By prior appointment, a user can have up to 8 hours of weekly use, as well as participating in training and creation courses. The offer is wide, taking into account the various age ranges of the population, their interests, and the characteristics of the neighbourhood where the library is located.

The objectives of the multimedia spaces

- To cover the informational training needs of the territories, getting the library IT tools closer to the users who need them.

- To offer training and creation courses with the aim of facilitating the acquisition of a base of knowledge so as to give the user greater autonomy.
- To make available to the users self-learning courses, especially in the official languages of the country.
- To boost creation in a multimedia setting (creation of blogs or websites, digital music, design, animation, etc.) in different ambits and ages.

Training is part of the inclusion strategies.

Evidently the multimedia spaces are aimed at the public in general, but special emphasis is given to the sectors of the population most at risk of exclusion due to the existence of the digital gap.

- The immigrant population

The figures show that 14% of the users of the Libraries of Barcelona are immigrants, a proportion similar to the number of immigrants registered in the city: 15.67%. This proportion is the same, and even just surpasses it, when referring to loans of documents: 15.67% of the users of the loans service are immigrants. The multimedia spaces have a specific programme which is adapted to the population sector needs, especially in terms of the acquisition of the linguistic skills needed to be able to develop as a citizens with full rights (self access courses for Catalan and Spanish, the official languages of the country) and the learning of the use of Internet with specific resources as for example the search for housing or a job. There are also basic courses in computer skills. In this sense the use of Internet is free, and the programme has signified an increase in the number of PCs in each Library. From the multimedia spaces a service of webcams is also offered to make distant communication closer.

- The elderly

The majority of the elderly who come to the libraries of the city libraries do so to read the newspaper or borrow a book. Currently the offer of courses and workshops in the multimedia spaces invite everyone with a lack of knowledge of the world of ICT to go to a computer and start to get trained. The offer includes basic training courses: from basic Internet, computer skills, to topics of specific interest (such as cooking or natural medicine, for example). As we will see later on, programmes have also been carried out that encourage the elderly to make active use of digital resources to explain their vital histories in activities for the recuperation of the memory.

The offer

The programming of the multimedia spaces has until now been carried out following three thematic lines: informational training, fostering the

creation of contents by the users and the use of leisure time by means of the technological tools. Here are some examples:

Training field: Internet, e-mail, self-access advice, computer skills etc.

Creative field: digital animation, digital photography, website creation, robotic workshop, etc.

Leisure field: playing with the Sims, starting out with video-games, etc.

The three thematic fields share common objective, that respond to some of the recommendations of the IFLA/UNESCO Manifest about public libraries, such as:

- To facilitate the acquisition of basic skills in terms of information and information technology.
- To promote individual education and self-learning, as well as formal learning at all levels, especially in those social groups at greater risk of educational exclusion, the elderly, immigrants, etc.
- To offer opportunities for personal creation growth.
- To stimulate the imagination and creativity at all ages, especially infants and youths.

Both the programming and programme used have been adapted to the needs of the users, of the territories and also the specialisations of the libraries (some of the Libraries of Barcelona have part of their collection specialised in different topics) responding to criteria of proximity.

During 2006, the spaces registered a total of 134,451 users and the offer increased to a total of 349 workshops and courses, with an average attendance of 6.7 people per workshop. In terms of the age ranges of the users, 2% per used by infants, 26% youths, 66% adults, and 6% the elderly.

Socio-educational intervention in the library of Bon Pastor

This project was carried out in the Bon Pastor Library, located in the neighbourhood of the same name, in the border area of Barcelona with the surrounding towns. Since the moment of its inauguration it has been evident the problems of behaviour of different groups of users, with clear characteristics of population at risk of social exclusion.

Among the users who used the library from the outset was a group mostly of people used to using libraries, plus, however, another group who had never used a library, and showed an important lack of the relational habits and those of co-existence. The characteristics of this situation that made the setting in motion of the facility difficult, were as follows:

- Adults users who neither knew or respected the functioning of the library.

- Infant and adolescent users with lack of basic habits: problems of hygiene and behaviour, incapacity to relate with others, anti-social behaviour, vandalism, etc.
- Delicate balance between the "non-normalised" and the "normalised" users: dysfunction of the service, racist comments, fear of going to the library, etc.

In the first weeks of functioning, special attention was given to the provision of information and basic training in the use of the library and its services. This training task was especially complicated among the younger users, given that many of them suffered from serious personal and/or social problems: broken homes, school absenteeism, consumption of drugs, vandalism etc. Although taking into account the educational and training mission of the public library, the reality of the children and youths and the use they made of the facility, led to the staff being overwhelmed by the situation. It should be taken into account that the library staff, although they had a high degree of relational skills that helped to deal with and attend the public, had been trained by professionals from the library world, and therefore lacked the tools for carrying out interventions aimed at the type of users that the library presented. The analysis of the problem and the lack of resources in the territory made it necessary to look into the need for incorporating a social educator in the library team, with the responsibility for developing a socio-educational intervention for working with the group of children and youths at risk, and to facilitate the acquisition of skills among the library professionals, which would make them more skilled when faced with situations of conflict and would boost their educational function.

From the moment of incorporating, the educator and library team worked on the definition of the intervention (the role of the educator and the planning). The aim of the project was fixed in terms of the acquisition by the most conflictive and excluded users of basic habits of behaviour and relation that allows them to integrate with the rest of the library users, as well as creating an environment of co-existence and civic behaviour in the centre.

The working lines of the project as well as the actions to be carried out by the educator in the library, are as follows:

The socio-educational work focussed towards social integration.

- Teaching basic hygiene habits.
- Redirecting potentially conflictive situations: hyperactive behaviour, aggressive attitudes, etc.
- Inform about what can be done in the library, when and what the suitable space is, oriented towards and aimed at the users about the resources and activities of the library.

- Match the time spent in the library of the users with the use of this time.
- Relate within the group in an ordered and calm way.
- Integration of the library into the socio-cultural dynamic of the neighbourhood.
- Gradual integration of the users who belong to the more excluded groups in the library with the rest of the users.
- Establishment of protocols and criteria of action agreed with the library staff for dealing with certain situations of conflict.
- Communication with the parents or tutors of the users with conflictive behaviour.

Work in the field of attitudes, rules and values.

- Respect towards the library staff, between the users, towards the space, the material and the documents.
- Acceptance of the punishments or sanctions if the rules are not complied with, and the pedagogical redirecting by means of reflection and dialogue.
- Assertiveness in daily responses.
- Special emphasis on the intervention in the more problematic cases in the area of library behaviour.

The socio-educational work common to all users.

- Facilitate the knowledge of the library rules.
- Explain what the normal library behaviour is, both individual and group, and also make known the use of each of the library's spaces and services.
- Transmit to all the users the idea of the library as a centre of work to satisfy the cultural and informative needs of the whole of the population.

This intervention has turned the library into one of the most important socialising agents of the neighbourhood, alongside the school and other already existing resources. Different from these, the library is characterised by its flexibility and by its non-obligatory attendance. However, it carries out the work of reinforcing the learning of rules, values, and attitudes in the field of social behaviour that can complement the socio-educational work carried out by other social actors.

In the following chart you can see in a very synthetic way, the results obtained after six months of the project functioning.

ACTIONS	RESULTS
Emphasis on target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total number of children and youths attended - 50 • Total number of boys 27 • Total number of girls 23
Improvement of level of hygiene habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of children and youths 8 • Number of children and youths that improved 6 • Percentage 75%
Improvement of standards of behaviour and respect for others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of children and youths 50 • Number of children and youths that improved 26 • Percentage 52%
Improvement in habits of use of the spaces, material, and respect for the rules..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of children and youths 80 • Number of children and youths that improved 60 • Percentage 75%
Improvement in the use of the Internet service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of children and youths 50 • Number of children and youths that improved 26 • Percentage 52%
Improvement in the level of responsibility towards their younger brothers or sisters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of children and youths 8 • Number of children and youths that improved 5 • Percentage 60%

The aim of this succinct review is to show that a multidisciplinary team enables a more global and integral attention of the users, and therefore are qualitatively better.

The public libraries are going to encounter similar situations more and more frequently, due to the increase of excluded people that the society generates. Does this mean that the staff of libraries will be needing to incorporate professionals from a social background? The current availability of professional resources makes this horizon a difficult aim to achieve, and not very realistic, at least in the case of Spain. The debate shouldn't be focussed on whether the staff of libraries should have these types of professionals, but if they should have the possibility of

intervening transversally or not, at specific moments or in a stable way with these professional roles when the social role needs it, as has been the case of the Bon Pastor Library of Barcelona.

The educator, as a facilitator of social skills for those being educated, but also for the professional librarians, should be a more and more present resource in the social fields of disadvantaged territories. Such as the library...

Vivències Project.

2006 was the 75th anniversary of the 2nd Spanish Republic and the 70th anniversary of the Civil War. Coinciding with these two commemorations, the Libraries of Barcelona designed various projects whose main focus was the recuperation of the history of daily life of our environments based on oral sources. One of these was "*Vivències*" (Personal experiences), that collected testimonies from the people who had lived these two historic events. With this initiative the aim was to give voice to a whole generation that had to face the silence of a dictatorship and the subsequent transition, while at the same time getting them closer to the modern library services. Given that these are people getting on in age means that they are not in general well informed about the modern libraries. The aim was also to turn the libraries into centres for sociability (and therefore cohesion) by inviting the elderly to participate and become the protagonists of the cultural life of the city. Finally, the knowledge contributed by these users of the libraries was made available to all the citizens and in a universal way by means of digital formats.

During the forty years of the dictatorship of Francisco Franco a lot of work was done to silence the recent history of the Spanish Republic and to neutralise the democratic, social, educational and cultural advances that this had taken, destroying and confiscating the physical proofs: books, documents, photographs, etc. And we haven't forgotten, using, to do so, a fierce repression that signified death, imprisonment, exile, and forced silence for thousands and thousands of Spanish. With the arrival of the democratic governments a pact of silence was made to guarantee, it was said, the survival of the weak Spanish democracy of that time, and work was begun from scratch as if nothing had happened during the previous 45 years. These two variables have led us to a situation like few, and very strange, in a western country in the 21st century: there is a complete period in the recent history of our country, that from the point of view of the daily life and local history is undocumented.

In many cases, the unique testimony that we have left, are the people who lived these events first hand: the republican spring, the pain of war, and the grey years of the dictatorship. All of them are very old people,

who in many cases have already lost part of their memories, or that have become deformed with the passing of time.

However because we are in the 21st century, the aim has been to develop this project with the tools and means that the technologies offer: the memories of this generation will be conserved in digital formats that will allow direct and universal access.

It is hoped that these people will feel doubly protagonists: as well as giving us the testimony of their histories, it has been they themselves who have written directly in digital format, who from a computer have embodied their memories. To do so, they have participated in workshops and IT literacy courses in the multimedia spaces of some of the public libraries of the city.

The collection of these testimonies is the recognition of the people who have participated in the creation of our present day society and moreover an indispensable requirement for a country in the conquest of its history, of that history that took place in the academic books, and is introduced in the anonymity of daily life, giving voice to its protagonists. As mentioned before, the elderly are the new excluded, the new forgotten ones. This has been a generation doubly excluded, before for political and economic reasons, and now for technological and generational reasons. With this project the aim has been to modestly contribute to the normalised inclusion of our grandparents into the cultural life of the city by trying to overcome the gaps that mark the border between inclusion and exclusion. A land where the elderly find themselves too often.

The working process with these was established in four phases of energising and learning in the form of just one workshop:

- Working sessions on the memory as an element of reflection and discussion about a certain historical event.
- Sessions for learning about the narrative resources with regard to the genre of memoirs, and of the practice of writing as a tool of transmission.
- Training sessions in computer skills, with the aim of making this means known for producing the final document of the process.
- To collect the testimonies, those produced in the workshops and those received through other ways.

Although it was less than expected (with an average of 7 per workshop) the attendance of these should be valued in a very positive way, taking into account that the ICT is not a means which causes a high level of confidence among the elderly, in fact quite the opposite, it leads to fear and insecurities. However it has served to make known our libraries, as is demonstrated by an increase of 13.6% in the number of loans carried out by people over the age of 65, compared with the same period for the previous year, and a 57.8% increase with regard to the use of Internet.

The final product has been the publication of a book in digital format that can be consulted in the website of the Libraries of Barcelona: <www.bcn.cat/biblioteques>. The collection process will have been completed when the 124 personal histories have been written and published.

The objectives of the project

A/ With regard to the memory

- *To contribute to the collection of the testimonies within the current process of recuperation of the historic memory.*

Vivències has taken advantage of the opportunity of the historical commemorations so as to achieve a greater social and media repercussion. We believe it is interesting to use the motor that signifies the fact of being able to develop initiatives of this type, to start and consolidate projects and make stable over time.

- *To offer a complementary vision of the events dealt with from the point of view of the daily life of the people.*

No-one can deny that there exists a large number of studies and literature about these historic events. And during the last year a number of new ones have appeared. However, there is still an important aspect missing from the central part of these studies, except perhaps what is dealt with in novels: the daily life of the people who lived these years first hand. Without wanting to give them an excessive sense of rigor, the stories collected fill a gap that gives a sense of great importance: to document the life of Barcelona during the Republic, the War, and the post war period. The aim is to get to know, and make known, what the education, food, children's street games, the bombings, and the repression, etc. were like. Overall, what life was like in Barcelona as a consequence of such significant events that influenced our process of development.

- *To increase the local collections of our libraries.*

As commented on before, there is lack of sources of information to enrich the local collections of public libraries. It is a basic function of these as cultural facilities of proximity. This lack has made necessary the search for other sources. And what better way that to look for them from among our users, who possess a patrimony that for biological reasons is on the point of disappearing without being sufficiently collected.

- *To guarantee the accessibility and preservation of the testimonies by conserving them in digital format.*

An objective of internal work, but not for this reason a trivial one: the digital format ensures its durability in time and also access of the support. The testimonies are accessible in the collections of the libraries in CD support, to be able to be consulted on completion of the project.

B/ In relation to social cohesion

- *To make known to the elderly the new model of libraries, as well as their services and activities.*

This aim, which could be qualified as 'hidden', is extremely important in the development of the project. With its implementation, the aim has also been to increase the degree of knowledge about the network of public libraries among the sector of the population who have in their imagery a model of library far from the current reality, and therefore are unaware to a great degree about the services and activities on offer. Among other reasons, this would also explain the lower attendance of this group in our facilities, or the use of very few services by them: reading the newspaper, magazines, etc. By attracting the elderly who are open to giving their testimonies, they have got to know a facility, the librarian, that most of them didn't use often, and have generated a multiplying factor by commenting this new experience among their nearest and dearest.

- *To boost the creativity among our users.*

The libraries have been and are deposits of information and contents. But one of the more interesting functions that the ICT and the new century offers us is the capacity to be able to produce contents - to create. This project enables the generation of information by the users, which until very recently could only consult, be informed, and consume. Now they are given, with the facility offered by the new technologies, the possibility of generating documentation, fiction, information, story endings, new contents.

- *To contribute to the informational literacy in those most disadvantaged social levels.*

The process of collection of testimonies has led to the design of small training workshops aimed at giving basic IT tools for the elaboration of stories in digital format: word processor and audio-digital recorder. In addition to a historic and narrative advice, the workshop aims to get the new technologies closer to a sector of the population structurally far from them.

- *To boost the use of the ICT in the programmes of cultural diffusion of the libraries.*

The new technologies haven't only improved access to the sources of information and the management of the libraries: they should also be used to their highest potential to improve and spread the programmes of cultural diffusion and promotion of reading. This is the channel for reaching many of the potential users, and can be a very valid tool for its plasticity and capacity for adaptation, in the programmes for social cohesion.

- *To increase the total number of readers/receivers of the testimonies by making them accessible by means of the website of the Libraries of Barcelona.*

It is evident that a diffusion on the net of the experience has multiplied the number of people who have received this project. Although it is still foreseen the publication of a book in printed format, the format of a digital book improves greatly the diffusion and number of readers.

Perhaps what is most important, at least from the human point of view is: the treatment of the testimonies, by being able to listen to them and read them, the transmission by them of an enormous sense of gratitude for having been given the chance to explain themselves, is surely the best recognition for a work of this type. We can't forget that if we talk about inclusion we also do so from the affective point of view: to feel loved and listened to reinforces the identity and feeling of belonging to a group.

5. CONCLUSIONS.

The challenge that the libraries have ahead of them, as this communication has tried to explain, is the demand for the adaptation of the cultural and social changes that are obligatorily being posed: how to successfully deal with them from a facility and a professional practice that is central in the fight for the reduction of cultural and informational inequalities, and therefore contribute to constructing a society with more cohesion, and less exclusion.

In the form of conclusions we outline the following strong ideas that emerge from the reflection carried out while writing this document:

- The library represents an environment of social intervention, as a space of prevention, detection and intervention of social exclusion: a space of primary attention, by means of observation and action behaviours can be modified, preventing risks and starting or complementing socialising processes.
- It is also a place for educational intervention: the library is a facility where the services and activities (the adaptability of these is a resources that makes them especially useful) are educational resources to be used by the professional librarians, but also susceptible to being used by other educational agents in the different processes of social intervention.
- The library is a space of social cohesion:
 - The immigrants as new citizens: the appearance of new groups from other cultures and areas of the world create cultural wealth and miscegenation. However the reality stubbornly shows us that it also creates exclusion. The library has to combat the cultural inequality that these

groups can suffer from, by means of the equal access to information and culture that the public service fosters.

- The youths and elderly are, along with the immigrants, the groups that are currently at greater risk of exclusion in the societies of the developed countries. These social sectors should become targets for obligatory intervention for the libraries. From a position of prevention but also in terms of direct intervention on the subjects and groups. The coordination, or better still, transversal praxis with other professionals from the social field, make it necessary to achieve fixed objectives in these types of actions.
- The ICT are an essential tool to combat marginalisation and social and cultural exclusion. But they have also increased as these technologies can dually create integration and also exclusion. It is therefore the work of the public library to use the immense power of the technology as a strategy for creating equality, that allows access to information and culture in a universal way. To do so, training tools need to be used, but without forgetting leisure and those that foster creation by the users.
- It is also necessary to offer proposals from the public libraries that contribute to the reduction of cultural inequalities that result from socially fragmented cultural consumption. The difference between elitist and popular culture also has to reduce. It is necessary to adapt the cultural services and programmes to the different social and cultural realities, attending certain groups in a singular way.

The public libraries cannot be seen as cultural facilities exclusive to the 'normalised' population, but as a resource for the whole of the population, and the locating of these in the territories, using proximity as a position and strategy, makes them a central resources in the fight for social cohesion.

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