

# **The Interactive Children's Library**

## **About the Project**

The interactive children's library is an untraditional and interdisciplinary research and development project exploring the children's library of the future.

Aarhus Public Libraries have joined forces with IT City ISIS Katrinebjerg, The University of Southern Denmark, four business enterprises and public libraries at Hjørring, Odder, Silkeborg and Vejle to develop systematic research and collect empirical knowledge about children's use of interactive means within the framework of children's libraries.

The project development is based on children's needs, culture and cultural experiences, and the research will be put to use in the shaping of a concept for the interior of the interactive children's library of the future. A library where IT-services based on pervasive computing, broadband network, 3D visualisation and interactivity constitute the instruments uniting the virtual with the physical.

The object is to meet children's needs for spaces providing new experiences, learning, events, sense impressions and physical activity. However, the library must still aim to be the place where children come to retrieve information which can contribute to support their cultural and democratic place in society.

## **The Children's Library of the Future?**

Imagine a children's library where movements activate the room and elements in the library, and where imagination is stimulated by sound, images and light. And at the same time it is possible to place oneself in isolation and become deeply absorbed.

How do we create a physical and visual sensation of being both inside and outside, of being both alone and part of a social group?

It could be by making use of installations where children by touching can answer questions and evoke light, sound or movements in the room. It could be by making use of interactive programmes built into installations for children to interact with and thereby encourage their interest in decoding symbols, images and text. Children's communication with the library, with the materials, with the room and with other children is visualized and inter-activated.

## **The first Prototype**

At the Transformation Lab placed in the Main Library of Aarhus, the first interactive children's library prototype has been installed. Three more are scheduled to succeed at a later date.

Now is the time where all the research and hard work is to be judged by a live audience: the children using the library. How they will respond to the installation is very interesting!

## **The Aims of the Project**

The project focuses on how the interactive children's library of the future in the best possible way can support children's learning processes and information qualifications both with regards to groups and individuals. Which new electronic aids could be relevant to install? What kind of renovation should be undertaken in the physical rooms? Which part should the children's library play in the society of the future? In which direction should the children's librarians go from here?

Addressing all these questions, the project aims to develop a concept for an interactive children's library which can be put to use in public libraries both nationally and internationally.

The project receives financial support from the Danish National Library Authority and runs until May 2006.

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