



The library
of one **hundred** talents;
towards a new concept for
children's libraries

marijke troelstra / amsterdam public library

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The library of one hundred talents

*'A child is not a barrel to fill
but a fire to enlighten'*

Library of 100 talents; a new concept for children's libraries

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Holland; some associations

Library of 100 talents; a new concept for children's libraries

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Een nieuw concept jeugdbibliotheek

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Holland – Denmark ; is there a difference ?

- Good network of libraries all over Holland (around 1200)
- No library law, not free for adults
- Libraryschool is higher education, not academic
- Little scientific research and publications
- No children's Library Council or Children's Culture Consultants
- Traditionally a lot of cooperation with schools

Library of 100 talents; a new concept for children's libraries

Or is it a small world ?

Exchange in 2003 - Danish-Dutch Dialogue;

No surprise: We all face the challenge of the new information society

- The role of the library and the librarian is changing into a much more (pro)active, co-operative, creative and out-going 'cultural entrepreneur' (see also R.Florida, 'The rise of the creative class', 2002)
- We agree that we have to address children differently and that we will have to make sure that children get more personally involved and learn that their opinions do have influence

Library of 100 talents; a new concept for children's libraries

Or as your former chairman of the Children's Council Professor Per Schultz Jorgensen puts it;

'it's not a question of extending the services and possibilities of passive entertainment, but to improve those cultural offers which turn children into players. We must try to make children into participatory, productive, responsible and reflecting human beings. They should be given a deep, fundamental feeling of being valuable contributors to society'

Library of 100 talents; a new concept for children's libraries

This calls for cooperation on a basis of shared views on responsibility with other partners in the cultural and educational field

'imagination is more important than knowledge, knowledge is limited, imagination encircles the world'

Einstein

Library of 100 talents; a new concept for children's libraries

The library of one hundred talents the background



- The Children's Libraries in Holland at present
- The changing (information) world in which children grow up asks for a new concept
- The Project Libraries 2040, in particular; The Partisan Library

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Looking at the future; libraries 2040

- The extrapolated past: *the probable future*
- This project is all about what we ourselves want in a *chosen future*, a future in which our ideals and dreams also have a fair chance
- The *desired future* of the year 2040



Library of 100 talents; a new concept for children's libraries

Children are 'programmed' differently

- Children and adults don't share the same culture anymore
- So what libraries need is not an update but a complete *new release*

Library of 100 talents; a new concept for children's libraries

Children's department in Amsterdam, 1935



Library of 100 talents; a new concept for children's libraries

The library of one hundred talents

- Children's libraries are a miniature version of adult libraries; in the final analysis, they are nothing but models made to scale by adults
- But are adults the right people to design libraries for children ?
- What should children's libraries be like in *their eyes*?

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Do we speak the right language ?

We approach children in our libraries as logical/mathematic and reading persons:

- In the logical, alphabetical order we put our collections in
- In the way we address them in instructions, PR our activities etc.

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Do we speak the right language ?

But; children are very different in the way they are 'intelligent' and learn.

The theory of Multiple intelligence (Gardner, 1983) might help us understand more about that

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Multiple intelligence

- The theory of multiple intelligence was developed in 1983 by Dr. Howard Gardner, professor of education at Harvard University. It suggests that the traditional notion of intelligence, based on I.Q. testing, is far too limited.
- In most people, certain types of intelligence are more highly developed than others. Children are therefore 'clever' in a variety of ways.
- The way a child learns and its specific interests should be the determining factors. A child's entire developmental potential should be tapped.

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The challenge for the project

- Turn libraries for children into developmental labs for future library work!
- Develop and put into practice a concept based on the ideas and the experiences of children themselves
- Make the concept practical for all libraries in Holland and elsewhere
- use the theory of 'Multiple intelligences' (H.Gardner) as a starting point



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The project-layout

1. Pilots in 3 libraries (Stadskanaal, Hellevoetsluis and Heerhugowaard); workshops with children based on the concept of 'Multiple Intelligences'
2. The Masterclass consisting of 25 children's librarians from all over Holland and the projectteam
3. The Amsterdam-project; the development of a concept for the Children's Department of the new Central Library of Amsterdam

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The project-layout

4. The development of a virtual Children's Library within 'Bibliotheek.nl' (jeugdbieb.nl)
5. A publication on the whole project to ensure the further take-over and development of the concept in Children's Libraries of the future in Holland and elsewhere



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The library of one talents hundred

objectives of the Masterclass

- Giving Children Librarians the opportunity to work on new ways, new concepts for Children's Librarianship
- Offer concrete ideas for their own (local) (re-) building projects
- Exchange and learn from new views, experiences from each other and from the pilotprojects

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The Masterclass-programme

- Feedback on the Pilotprojects
- Excursions (in combination with lectures)



Visits to inspiring, exciting concepts for children involving the system of Multiple intelligences in concepts for children (like children's musea, artprojects and Junibacken in Stockholm)

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The library of one hundred talents; What did we learn up till now;

The pilots:

Children want to be taken seriously and - when approached in the right way – they do have a lot to say about their dreams about the library of the Future. They mentioned;

- Divide the department in different areas; for the 'little ones' (0-7) and us (7-12), and make a quiet and a more adventurous area

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The library of one hundred talents; What did we learn up till now

- Use more attractive colours and materials ('metal is cold')
- Make a regonisable entrance; show that we are welcome in the library !
- Appoint young, friendly and dedicated staff

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The library of one hundred talents; What did we learn up till now

- Present the collection in a much more attractive way; use theme's instead of the classical order, surprise us with changing presentations
- Make the presentations multimedial, including PC's with the best sites the subject



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The library of one hundred talents;

The Masterclass; learn from and work together with other professionals !

We can learn a lot from other institutions working with children (musea etc) concerning:

- Presentation (more original, colourful, multimedial, interactive, inspiring)
- PR
- The way they stick to their concept and quality standard



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The library of one hundred talents; What did we learn up till now

Activities;

- Should focus more on **children in all their variety**; not only in social and cultural background but also in their talents
- The **cooperation with other partners** (artists, musicians, actors, authors, illustrators, sportsmen etc) is vital to both deepen and strenghten the quality of the projects *and* inspire ourselves



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The library of one hundred talents What did we learn up till now

Staff

All of this can only succeed with expert and dedicated personal on the floor and a well equiped 'Backoffice Children's Culture and PR'



Architects

Turn out to be good listeners, but speak a different language themselves. So it's very important to keep discussing, explaining and asking.

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The library of one hundred talents; What did we learn up till now

Different interests

Dealing with the different parties (management, local government, architects etc) involved in the process is an art and asks for patience, a sense of humor, persistence and endurance

'if you want rainbows, you will have to put up with rain' Dolly Parton

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The library of one hundred talents; the challenge for Amsterdam

make the new children's library into the most innovative, challenging one of the country with international grandeur



Library of 100 talents; a new concept for children's libraries

Starting points for the new children's department in Amsterdam

- The new children's department should be a place to meet, discover, wonder, learn and develop
- But is also a laboratory in which children will develop new forms of librarywork
- Takes into account and makes use of the different potentials and talents children have

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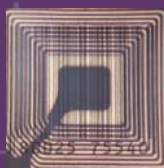
Starting points for the new children's department in Amsterdam

- Has an open eye and ear for the opinion of children concerning the general layout, the use of colours, materials, the collection and the activities
- Has no 'classical layout'; the library should be much more 'triggering', inspiring
- Has a multimedial collection and presentation

Library of 100 talents; a new concept for children's libraries

Starting points for the new children's department in Amsterdam

- Is flexible
- Makes use of the newest technology (RFID)
- Uses relevant, meaningful esthetics, objects



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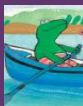
Monument for Astrid Lindgren, Junibacken - Stockholm



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What does all this mean in practice ?

- A general **layout** of the floor that should be so clear that everybody should be able to find his own way, but at the same time be able to get lost (be surprised)
- A division of the floor in a **part for the youngest (0-7) and the 7-12 year olds**, dividing the last part in a quiet, lounge-like part and a more adventurous one



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What does all this mean in practice ?

No classical order; the library should become much more inspiring. No more alphabetical or systematical order, but subjects

The traditional bookcase will be replaced by a **multimedia-object**



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Flexible: bookcases



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Flexible: walls and doors



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Speciale places: the laboratory a place for children to make themselves heard, read, listened to



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The (story) theatre;
a room for reading aloud sessions, storytelling,
small plays, workshops etc



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The 'Jewel Box';
an interactive exhibition with the crown jewels
from the collection old children's books



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Other points of attention; the informationdesk

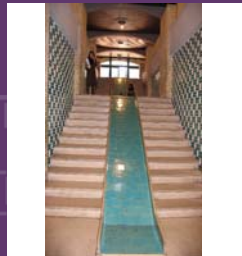


'the question is more important
than the answer'

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Other points of attention

The stairs towards the
children's department



Attention / a place for
children on the other
floors, in the theater,
the restaurants etc

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Other points of attention

Room for exhibitions
artwork by children
or artists working for
or with children



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A recognisable entrance..



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The cloakroom



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And where will it be ?



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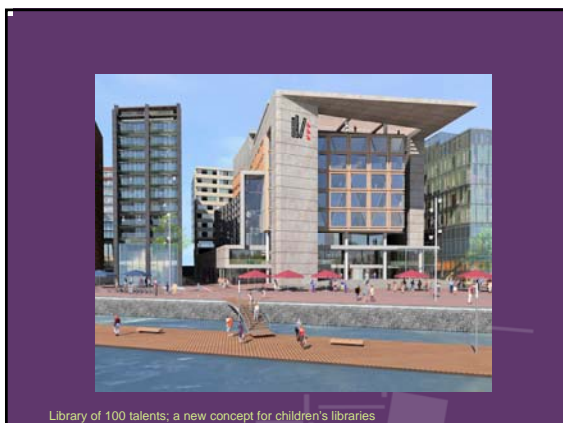
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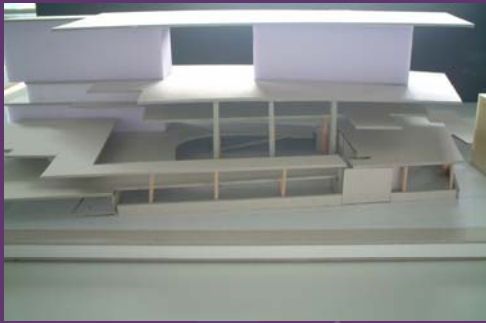


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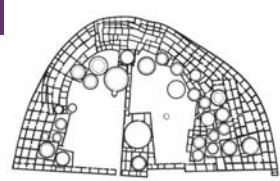
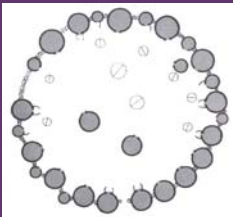
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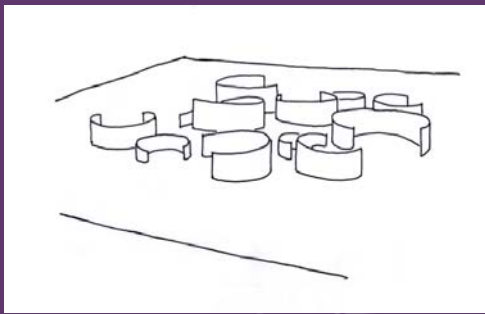
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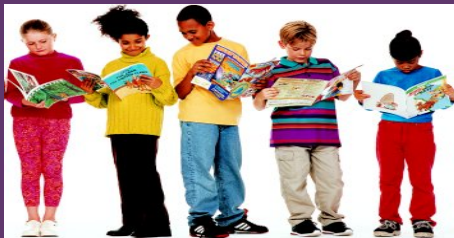
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Not forgetting the good things from the past..



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"Alone with a book, a child creates unique images somewhere within the secret chamber of the soul. Such images are vital for human beings. The day that children are no longer capable of creating such images will be the day when mankind is impoverished."

Astrid Lindgren (1907-2002)

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Welcome to the Amsterdam Public Library in 2007 !



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More information

- On the libraries 2040 project www.debibliotheek.nl
- On Amsterdam Public Library www.oba.nl
- On the architect Jo Coenen
www.jocoenen.com/index_content.htm

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