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To offer ebooks in libraries: a way to break down physical barriers to knowledge and culture

Rafael Peregrina, Aurélie Vieux, Stéphanie Pouchot, Benoît Epron

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TO OFFER EBOOKS IN LIBRARIES: A WAY TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE

**BOBCATSSS
LYON 2016
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2016**

Democratic and equal access to information and culture: what manifestos and codes of ethics say

"The services of the public library are provided on the basis of **equality of access for all**, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. **Specific services and materials** must be provided for those users who cannot, for whatever reason, use the regular services and materials, for example linguistic minorities, people with disabilities or people in hospital or prison." UNESCO

"All age groups must find material relevant to their needs. Collections and services have to include all types of appropriate media and **modern technologies** as well as traditional materials." UNESCO

"Librarians and other information workers use the most effective ways to make the material **accessible to all**. For this purpose they seek to ensure that the websites of libraries and other information institutions comply with international standards for **accessibility** and access to them is **not subject to barriers**." IFLA

Background

As institutions of public service, libraries play a major role in providing a democratic and egalitarian access to information and culture.

Integration of digital resources into libraries collections has created new difficulties, due to:

- the complexity of organising and making these contents easily available;
- visibility and promotion aspects.

This, not only because the mission of libraries cover access to every kind of resources, digital or not, but also because it is one of the patrons' expectations.

CALLIOPÉ PROJECT

• **18-month study**
(Jan. 2014 – July 2015)

• **Fieldwork:**
3 french and 2 swiss libraries

• **Main objective:**
to understand the way patrons receive a digital offer in library, in terms of content organization and the accordance of the borrowed reading devices with the digital content

• **Research method (Switzerland, University of Geneva - UNIGE)**

— Quantitative component:
online survey – 22 questions
- 114 respondents

— Qualitative component:
loan of mobile reading devices to 19 participants for a period of two weeks – Readers: Kobo, Sony Prs-t3, Cybook – tablets: HTC, iPads, Samsung, Asus – focus groups

• **Results:**
— **TYPICAL USER**



WHICH DEVICES DOES SHE OWN?

- Laptop
- Smartphone



HOW IS SHE USING THE LIBRARY?

- Often goes to the library
- Uses the digital resources from home, especially courses, journals, databases
- Works on her laptop, more rarely on the library's computers

WHO IS SHE?

- A 25 year old woman
- Scientific Bachelor
- Medicine student

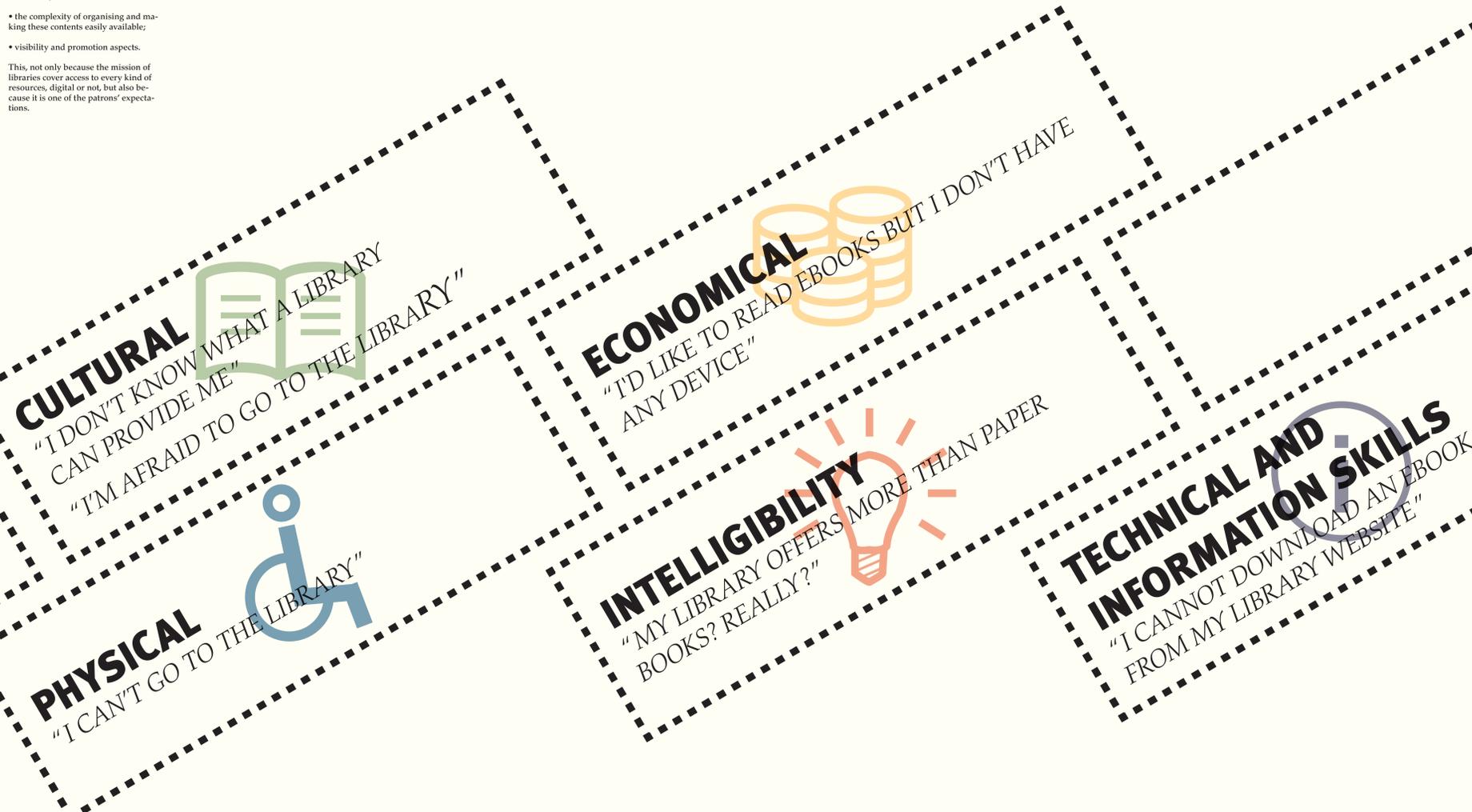
WHAT IS SHE DOING?

- Is highly connected, at the university and at home
- Uses her smartphone mainly for leisure (chatting with friends, social networks...)
- Uses her laptop only for academic work
- Spends more than 10 hours per week in front of a screen, regardless of the device

— **Best practice guidelines in collaboration with CLP (Public Libraries Working Community) and the UNIGE Library**

Some basic aspects must be taken into account: organisational matters and management support, technical aspects (open format, hardware/software requirement, etc.), human resources.

Six recommendation sheets providing advices dealing with content access and communication. Structure: each sheet addresses the context in which the action is relevant, general problems to solve, possible answers, recommendation for implementation, effects on the team and some specific communications ideas. Concrete actions are also suggested, they may vary depending on the type of library (academic, school or public).



1 TO SUPPLY THE PATRONS WITH PRELOADED READING DEVICES



We encourage libraries to give access to preloaded reading devices (lending or on-site use). In that way, users no longer have to buy their own. Neither they have to worry about technical problems or difficulties they may have finding and downloading content.

WHAT CAN YOU DO ?

Offer the opportunity to manipulate, test, and use several brands and models of preloaded devices.

The ebooks selection can be organised by themes, literary genre, language or a chosen target audience.

2 TO OFFER ONLINE USER BASED CUSTOMIZED ACCESS TO EBOOKS



Libraries must adapt and overcome some of their practices by providing an access not only by type of document (printed vs. digital), but based on the patrons profile and/or interests.

WHAT CAN YOU DO ?

The contents can be organised by:

- Education level
- Literacy
- Hobbies, interests
- etc.

3 TO PROPOSE DOWNLOADABLE LISTS OF EBOOKS

Patrons may have difficulties to find digital resources or to identify if a digital version of the book exists. In addition, borrowing terms and conditions may be difficult to understand.

WHAT CAN YOU DO ?

Specific content can be selected via topics, literary genre or language for example.

Offer digital shelves and sets of contents via streaming aggregators. An alternative to this commercial offer is proposed by downloading services offering a range of free ebooks organised by themes and / or ages.

4 TO DELIVER APPROPRIATE AND ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT EBOOKS



Patrons may have difficulties to identify, find, access and read ebooks. Some may overrate their skills while they lack the technical and informational knowledge needed. We encourage libraries to deliver information about the use of ebooks, information literacy and digital reading devices.

WHAT CAN YOU DO ?

- Inform users about ebooks collections specificities, for example differences with paper collections, coverage, or added value.
- Inform about the access modes, technical aspects and restrictions.
- Try to "de-demonize" digital reading.

5 TO TRAIN PATRONS AND TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO SELF-STUDY



It is necessary to train patrons to discover, use and take advantage of ebooks, help them to become independent.

WHAT CAN YOU DO ?

Several initiatives/actions can be undertaken such as:

- Highlighting and presenting the digital offer at registration

6 TO EFFICIENTLY COMMUNICATE TO HIGHLIGHT EBOOKS



Ebooks have appeared quite recently in libraries collections and this kind of resources are intangible, the offer is often little-known by patrons.

The lack of communication pushes away users who need to be informed and accompanied.

WHAT CAN WE DO ?

Materialising and making ebooks visible by using QR codes pointing to online versions.

Making them more visible on websites (list of favourites, new acquisitions ...) and on social networks.

