



GLOBAL VISION DISCUSSION

Report of the Finnish meeting
How a united library field can tackle the
challenges of the future – Ideas for actions



Contributors

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Index

Contributors	2
Index	2
Introduction.....	3
About the participants.....	3
Opportunities for the country and region.....	4
Priorities for the country	4
Priorities for the region	4
Ideas for action.....	5
Ideas for action for opportunity 1 : We must be champions for intellectual freedom.....	5
Ideas for action for opportunity 7 : We need to develop a spirit of collaboration	6
Ideas for action for opportunity 6: We need to ensure stakeholders understand our value and impact	6
Ideas for action for opportunity 5: advocacy	7
Ideas for action for opportunity 7: collaboration.....	8
A global conversation	8

Introduction

On 23rd of May 2018, in Töölö Library Helsinki Finland, 16 librarians participated in a conversation about how a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future. This meeting was hosted by Finnish Library Association. Together all participants represent 202 years of library experience.

We built on the results from phase 1 of the conversation to gather ideas for actions for IFLA that help a united field tackle the challenges of the future. This is our contribution to **the largest ideas store of actions**.

Participants in our workshop came from all sorts of libraries: public, scientific and special libraries. Most of them participated in the first Global Vision workshop in Helsinki September 2017 but also a few new participants were able to join us. We had the pleasure of having Mrs. Kirsti Tuominen as our facilitator. She's had an outstanding career in public libraries and is currently working as a mentor and a coach.

One of the important outcomes of this workshop and the whole Global Vision process is that professionals from different kind of libraries came together. It is important for the whole library field and professionals in Finland that we recognize that pretty much the same challenges and possibilities concern us all.

During the workshop, we also came up with some brilliant ideas that can be developed further and used in the advocacy work of the Finnish Library Association. One of these is the “When nobody cares – library does” campaign for the societal responsibility of libraries.

About the participants

The participants in the workshop are divided by experience in the field in the following way:

Years of experience in libraries	Number of participants
1-10 years of experience	6
11-20 years of experience	6
21-30 years of experience	1
31+ years of experience	3

Each participant shared in which type of library they have most experience:

Years of experience in libraries	Number of participants
National Libraries	1
Academic and Research Libraries	2
Public Libraries	10

School Libraries	
Special Libraries	2
Other Types of Libraries	
Not a librarian	1

Opportunities for the country and region

In phase 1 of IFLA's global vision discussion, ten opportunities have been discovered for the library field. These opportunities are global. Regionally, nationally, and locally, there are differences in which opportunities take priority. In the meeting, we debated the top opportunities for Finland and Europe.

Priorities for the country

The participants identified the following top-3 among the opportunities for the country:

Top 3 Opportunities for Finland

• 1	We must be champions for intellectual freedom
• 7	We need to develop a spirit of collaboration
• 6	We need to ensure stakeholders understand our value and impact

Comments:

All the five groups were unanimous about the top three. The first opportunity (We must be champions for intellectual freedom) was absolutely the most agreed upon. This part of the workshop seemed to be quite an easy discussion and selection.

Priorities for the region

The participants identified the following top-5 among the opportunities for the region:

Top 5 for Europe

• 1	We must be champions for intellectual freedom
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• 9	We need to maximise access to the world's documentary heritage
• 7	We need to develop a spirit of collaboration
• 3	We need to understand community needs better and design services for impact
• 2	We must update our traditional roles in the digital age

Comments:

In the discussion it was agreed that the digital age transforms every service, also libraries. Service design was mentioned as one valuable tool for libraries now and in the future.

Ideas for action

To realise the opportunities for our country, we focused on creating ideas for actions. These ideas will be entered into the ideas store for action of IFLA. Our recommended actions for each of the top-3 opportunities and the specially highlighted opportunities 5 (advocacy) and 7 (collaboration) are:

Ideas for action for opportunity 1 : We must be champions for intellectual freedom

The top-5 ideas for action we as librarians could consider to realise this opportunity in our country are:

Finland

1. Freedom of Speech Day in libraries

2. Discussing freedom of speech among library professionals

3. Events in libraries like session about Freedom of Speech

4. Developing services and collections for all user groups

5. Taking into account of multilingualism (different languages) and accessibility in libraries

Comments:

Freedom of Speech is important, but it could be difficult to communicate to the public how libraries contribute to freedom of speech. We should emphasize that libraries offer access to information for all and librarians can help by curating the information flow.

Also, for libraries it is essential to advance critical literacy not freedom of the press.

It should also be noted that freedom of speech can be viewed as a positive or a negative freedom and especially the positive freedom can be problematic if viewed too widely (hate speech etc.).

Ideas for action for opportunity 7 : We need to develop a spirit of collaboration

The top-5 ideas for action we as librarians could consider to realise this opportunity in our country are:

Finland

1. One library card for all libraries in Finland
 2. One e-book service for all public library users
 3. Mentoring and coaching as tools for sharing knowledge and ideas
 4. Employee exchange between public and scientific libraries
 5. One library association and one Library Meeting
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Comments:

One e-book service for all users could support literacy and multilingualism.

Every Finn has a card for Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, which is a government agency that provides basic economic security for everyone living in Finland. This card could be implemented to work as a library card.

Ideas for action for opportunity 6: We need to ensure stakeholders understand our value and impact

The top-5 ideas for action we as librarians could consider to realise this opportunity in our country are:

Finland

1. Invite politicians to the library (to participate in library events etc.)
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2. Basic brochure about libraries in general

3. Making the work visible with communications: this is what we do, and this is the impact on society

4. Defining joint values of libraries

5. Impact measurement (national tools)

Comments:

Fortunately, the joint values of libraries are already in place from the first round of Global Vision Workshop. In Finland these values are: openness, reliability of information, furthering and promoting equality, free of charge, learning & art / societal responsibility.

Ideas for action for opportunity 5: advocacy

Five bold actions that are needed for us (as librarians) to improve advocacy for the library field in our country are:

Finland

1. Closing down all libraries and libraries online services for one day

2. “When nobody cares – library does” campaign for the societal responsibility of libraries (that work for disadvantaged groups)

3. Challenge for the national media literacy week: “Believe all that you read”

4. Making the price of services visible

5. Average loan price made visible for customers in check-out receipts

Comments:

The second idea was generally considered brilliant. As we know banks and many other services have closed their offices. In real life it is usually libraries that help with many issues this should be made visible with the campaign “When nobody cares – library does”.

It was noted that there was a strike of librarians in Finland in the 1980s, but it did not work out since many people did not take part in the strike. It was also noted that making the prices or costs of library services visible could be risky.

Ideas for action for opportunity 7: collaboration

Five bold actions that we (as librarians) could take to improve collaboration across the library field in our country are:

Finland

1. One trade union for librarians and
 2. Work rotation between different libraries
 3. One library association
 4. Trading of expert librarians between municipalities
 5. Developing an online national discussion forum for all the libraries
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One bold action that we could take as librarians to improve collaboration within our region, is:

Making international work exchange as easy as possible with minimum amount of bureaucracy.

Comments:

Expert librarian exchange between municipalities was considered a good idea. Also, it was discussed how the Finnish Library Association could develop the discussion on the library field. There already exists some active Facebook networks that include hundreds of library professionals.

A global conversation

This report is created in an interactive process in Helsinki City Töölö Library on 23rd May 2018. It is part of a global conversation initiated by IFLA on how a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future, currently in phase 2.

Over the course of two years (2017-2018), IFLA will involve as many librarians and others as possible in this global conversation. Participants are encouraged to continue the conversation in their own networks and

organization and share the results with IFLA. In the beginning of 2019, the results of all the workshops and online discussions will be presented to IFLA's GB, which in turn will use the ideas for actions to create concrete strategies, processes and work programmes for the future.

To learn more about the global conversation, and download supporting materials to support your own activities, visit <https://www.ifla.org/globalvision>.

Stay tuned for news about the IFLA Global Vision discussion following [#iflaGlobalVision](https://twitter.com/iflaGlobalVision) and make sure to cast your vote in August when the online voting platform is available on <https://www.ifla.org/globalvision>.