





Mindspot
Make it my Library
Reflection Report from the Development Project YOUng
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Citizens' Services and Libraries, 2009.

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Contents

5	Introduction
7	The people behind the project
8	The most Significant Experiences
10	Project YOUng was the Beginning
13	Mindspot is a Universe
14	A Question of Words...
17	A Conversation with Young People
20	Democracy in Practice
22	Being a Mindkeeper
25	Mindspot = Mindspotters
29	The Library as Producer
32	Assistance for Young Innovators
34	To be Young in a Corner
37	Young Performers
40	The Spotmobile Sets Out
42	Virtual Meeting with Young People
45	Focusing on Information
48	Make it your Library
50	We cannot go it Alone
53	A Reflective Process with Disruptions and Self-Evaluation
59	List of publications
61	Bibliography



Introduction

With the initiation of project YOUng, we wanted to turn the library into a relevant and interesting partner in the lives of young people. We worked on turning the library into a mouthpiece for young people and their culture, a creator of opportunities and an initiator of conversations. It was and still is our opinion that a youth library should ideally help create a whole person, who is professionally skilled, has active leisure pursuits and who is generally interested in his or her surrounding world.

During the process, the service was developed and our focus changed from wanting to create a relevant physical youth library to focusing on creating a meaningful library offer for young people both physically, virtually and socially. In this way, we no longer think of the library as a physical place but rather as a service and an idea that can be as good as omnipresent. We focus on the various services, which are relevant to young people and we strive to work with elements that make sense to them in their conceptual universe, their leisure and school life. We wish to make the library focus more on producing knowledge and self presentation than on making materials available.

From the beginning of the project, the involvement of users was a fundamental condition. User involvement was generated by continuously conversing with young people about the library. We carried on conversations in different ways and on different levels: Some took place as activities, others as observations, some as conversations and yet others as workshops. Some conversations were indepth, others superficial, but what they had in common was that they provided essential input into what a youth library in Aarhus should be.

We consider user involvement, conversation and young people's need to be active and promote themselves to apply to both libraries and other cultural institutions that



wish to address young people. The challenge is the same: How do we continuously guarantee a relevant offer for young people? The answer is simple: Young people must be involved in the creation of such an offer. The challenge is to find out how to implicate young people without creating discrepancy between content and form and between tradition and future.

We hope that this report can provide readers with input on how the conversation with young people can be used to generate a relevant cultural offer with and for young people.

Louise Overgaard,
Aarhus, 12 February 2009



The people behind the project

Many people have been involved with project YOUng.
Key persons are:

Mindspotters: Mikkel Vithner Hansen, Karen Julie Fink, Christian Lade Broch-Lips, Saif Janus El-Sarraj, Søren Yde Jensen, Kasper Hemme and Steffen Findinge

Mindkeepers: Michael Høyer-Nielsen, Annie Christensen, Lisbeth Mærkedahl, Kirstine Jakobsen, Jesper Sørensen Ølsgaard, Jane Kunze, Anne Stæger and Jannik Mulvad

Project managers: Louise Overgaard and Kirstine Jakobsen

Project consultant: Sidsel Bech-Petersen

Project owner: Charlotte Stoltenberg

Evaluator (reflector): Michael René Kristiansson

Steering group: Karin Dyrborg Kjeldsen, Birgitte H. Simonsen, Bo Fristed, Knud Schulz, Charlotte Stoltenberg and Louise Overgaard

Many thanks

To all the young people who participated in every conceivable and inconceivable way in the various initiatives of YOUng – without you there would be no Mindspot. To the vast network of youth stakeholders, cultural stakeholders and suppliers who have enriched the project. To Citizens' Services and Libraries, especially the management and employees of Aarhus Main Library, who put up with a little of everything.

The most Significant Experiences

The library should be an active and versatile player throughout the entire life of the user! The library should support the production of knowledge and generate relations between the users and the library. It is not sufficient to make materials available.

Take up challenges, try new things, think big and enter into surprising connections! Think outside the box and consider the library as an idea rather than a place because a place is limiting while thinking of the library as an idea generates possibilities.

We must put the user in the centre! The library must work actively to provide young people with experiences because otherwise the library will not have young users who are interested and who use the library out of desire rather than obligation. We must be able to include and motivate their interests and their selfrealisation.

Involve young people in the daily work and in innovation work! They are at eye level with other young people and can generate valuable communication between the institution and the youth. Therefore a better result can be reached.

Do not attempt to be 'young with the young'! The adults who are a part of the service must respect and be interested in young people and they must make sure that the young people are given this impression.

The librarian must be ready to take on new roles! In order to be able to cooperate with young people on innovative work and in order to generate a relevant broadly-based library offer, which focuses on young people and which is

centred around the interests of young people, the librarian must be able to act in many different ways and in many different communities.

Mix various people, personalities and occupational groups! A wider perspective, greater inspiration and challenges as well as a better result can ultimately be reached by doing so.

Be outreaching and venture out to where the young are! Why should the users come to us when we can come to them? We must seek them out when and where they have the need. This can take place for instance by creating an environment within the networks where the young already move.

Create networks! A good, large and fruitful network is incredibly rewarding: it eases and qualifies the work because access to other competences is gained. Remember that it generates both networks and PR if the library is visible outside of the physical library.

Create an environment, which speaks to the young! It is important to have flowers as well as cables, ambience as well as technology, cosy oases as well as high-tech equipment. When developing and establishing spaces for young people at or outside the library, focus must be on both decor and location of the room as well as on which offers the room should contain. If daily activities, other than fun and games, are to take place, then this must be carefully incorporated into the location and decor of the room.

Lessons in information searching should not be boring! Young people believe that they are capable of finding the information they need by themselves and so do many of their teachers. If the library is to be an active partner in school work and assignment work, then the library must come to the school and the librarians must be able to match the teaching qualifications that young people usually encounter in the school and education system.

Arrange specific and unorthodox events, which address specific target groups! Youth culture appeals to a wider group than the 14-20 year-olds and therefore it is more important to keep focus on the areas of interests than on age in order to make an offer successful. Remember that events must be held when it suits the users and not when the library is open.

The offer must be visible and known to the young! Use as many different channels as possible in order to spread the word.

Do not do anything by halves and be cool! Most young people expect you to be cool. They are impatient and believe that things should just work. As a consequence of this it is better to do a little, which is done really well and thoroughly, than wanting to do it all and then having it come to nothing in the end.

Things take time! It takes time to involve young people, to create trust and knowledge of the offer, and to become fully aware of what the process should entail. Man hours must be reserved and time for continuous adjustments and evaluation as well as trying out and repeating successes must be set aside. No youth service can exist without resources.

Form a fixed method that guarantees reflection and thereby progression in your innovation work! There has to be room for contemplation and to look back in order to focus on the further course.

Project YOUng was the Beginning

...in our society, youth is present only when its presence is a problem, or is regarded as a problem¹

In 2006, a number of young people, cooperation partners and library staff cooperated on developing on the idea and putting together a project description for project YOUng. This description and the outlined criteria for success constituted the framework of the project process. The outlined criteria for success were as follows:

- The young will have a centrally located place for learning, being and developing, which provides culture and learning offers that have been developed based on their needs
- 12 annual network-based offers for young people will be arranged
- The place will be open five days a week
- User involvement will constitute a significant working method and the media used by young people will be utilised to accomplish the project
- At least 50 young people will be trained in speaking in public
- 10 young people will be trained to guide others in carrying out projects, information searching and manufacturing of products
- The library offer will be expanded to focus on young people's own production and abilities to express themselves
- An idea catalogue will be compiled, which contains ideas for how the combination: young people, space, library, learning, leisure time and interaction leads to the library of the future
- A script about user involvement of young people in the public library will be produced
- New expressions in the room are tested and the demands and needs, which the youth has for the new MEDIASPACE in Aarhus, are clarified

The project takes shape

Following the initial phase of idea development, project YOUng had a long starting phase and the project encountered several barriers before it finally began to take shape. Originally, the idea was to create a youth library in the shopping centre, Bruun's Gallery, which is centrally located in Aarhus, but this turned out not to be possible. Subsequently, work was carried out to create a mobile library, which was to visit the city squares and open spaces as well as schools and places of upper secondary education.

As this turned out not to be possible either, it was decided, in the spring of 2007, that a service should be created, which consisted of a room in Aarhus Main Library, cooperation with the city's schools and a mobile service, which could go to the various festivals and large events in the city. With this decision, Mindspot started to become a reality.

The project work

During the project phase, the project progressed and moved away from the original project description. This was partly due to the aforementioned location issues, and partly due to the fact that user involvement throughout the project created a flow of new wishes and new experiences. Last but not least, we employed an evaluation method that involved continuous adjustment of the project.

The evaluation was approached as an action research project between the Royal School of Library and Information Science and Aarhus Main Library. The cooperation was equal and the evaluator did not receive a fee. The intention was to improve both practice and theory regarding practices of evaluation². The project evaluation therefore became a combination of self-reflections in the project group; 'disruptions' by the project evaluator, Associate

Facts

Project YOUng ran from 1 January 2007 to 1 April 2009. The idea for project YOUng was developed through network meetings beginning in the spring of 2006 with youth clubs, youth organisations, schools, young people and artists.

YOUng was the official title of the project while the fully developed offer was entitled Mindspot. Mindspot is continued after the conclusion of the project.

The goal was to replace the traditional library offer with an offer that took into consideration the library needs of the 14-20 year-olds.

Aarhus Main Library was furthermore the coordinator for the EU-project MEeting YOUth, which was subsidised by the EU Commission's Youth Programme. This provided YOUng with new perspectives and international input.

Professor PhD Michael René Kristiansson; as well as internal evaluations conducted by the portfolio secretariat of Aarhus Main Library. This continuous and compounded form of evaluation was used in order to create a dynamic evaluation in which adjustments were made along the way, where new benchmarks were set, and where the goals were constantly modified in a way that kept our statements of aims current and relevant documents.

Throughout the project, the project group consisting of trained librarians (the Mindkeepers) wrote notes of reflec-

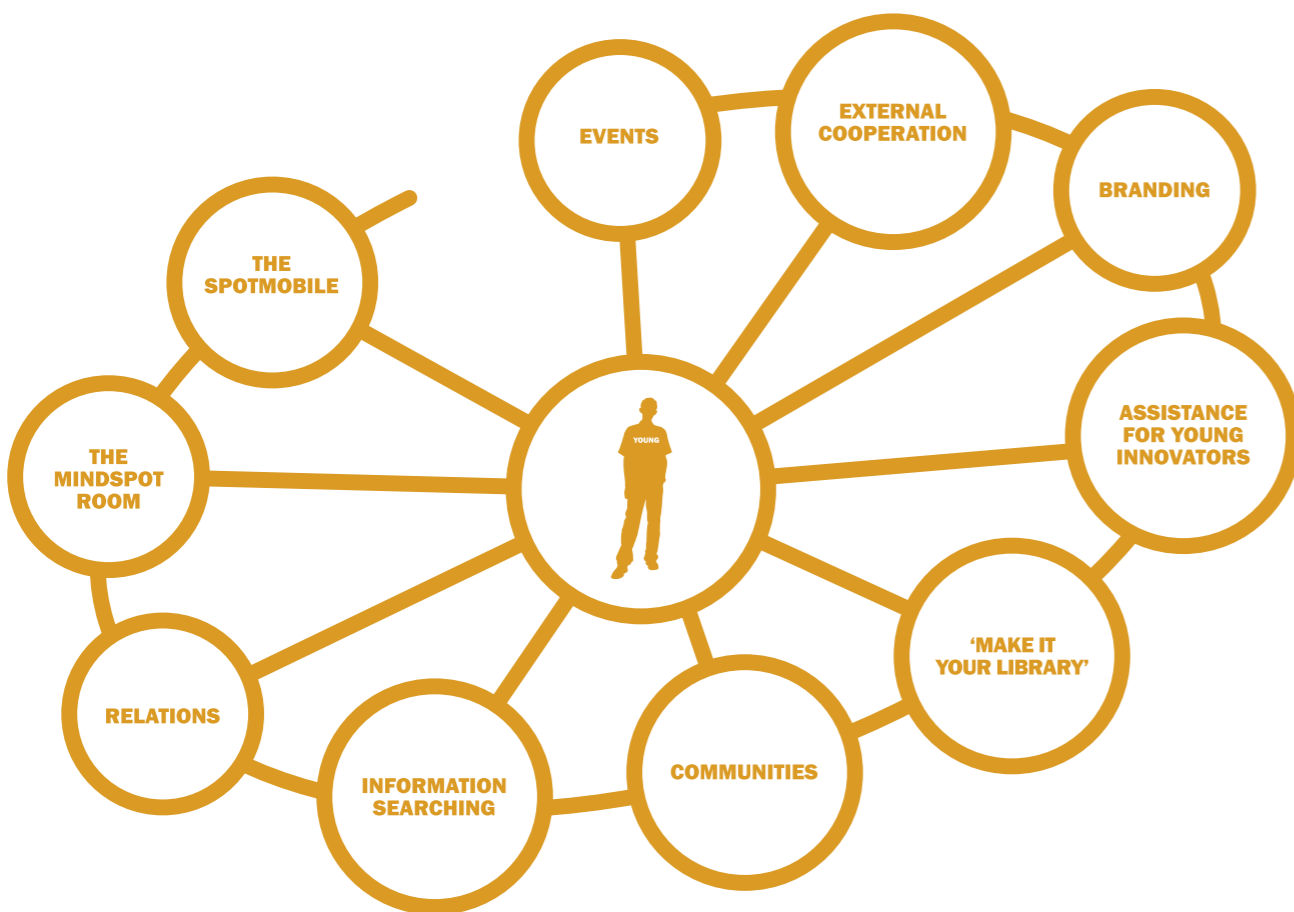
tion about the work, which they were carrying out. The questions were formulated by the project manager and the evaluator. The Mindkeepers reflected on their role and the progression of the project. The constant reflections were continuously compared with each other and they were part of the cause of the frequent discussion of the ongoing work that took place. On the basis of this, a plan for the onwards course of the project was formed. At the same time, however, the project had to take into account the original criteria for success.

Working with a dynamic evaluation process as well as static criteria for success has not been without problems. Does the fact that the project has acquired a different focus along the way mean that we have not achieved the goal of our project, or does a changed pattern of action mean that we have become wiser along the way? How do we compare the static criteria for success to a working method that draws on user involvement? Naturally, we could not tell the users that they could only think what would fit into the criteria for success. And what carries the most weight: the original criteria for success or the ensuing experiences?

Despite all these dilemmas the project has fulfilled the criteria for success. The core of our project evolved from being the physical space to becoming the conversation with young people. The youth library YOUng evolved into the universe Mindspot and the wish to show to the young the library as a physical place changed into wanting to show them the library as a service. The project developed from being a project focusing on space to a project focusing on communication.

¹ Hebdige, Dick (1988): *Hiding in the Light*, Routledge, London, p. 17.

² Read more in the chapter *A Reflective Process with Disruptions and Self-Evaluation*.



Mindspot is a Universe

Mindspot is an infinite universe of opportunities³

Mindspot is the service, which has been developed on the basis of project YOUng and which is carried on after the conclusion of this project. Mindspot is a model for combining and expanding our three main elements: the room, the cooperation with schools and the outreaching work. Mindspot is the result of the shifts in focus, which occurred in the project along the way.

The project evolved from an attempt to create a physical youth library for the 14-20 year-olds to an attempt to create a relevant youth library service. Communication with young people was essential in order to create this and that is why the continuous conversation with young people became our focal point. Since we had to meet the young people where they were, and not where we wanted them to be, presence also became a significant issue.

The effect of this development was that we now think differently of the offer, which we have generated with Mindspot and this is the kind of thinking that we believe is fundamental to the meeting between young people and the library:

- Mindspot is not a place. *Mindspot is a universe* that meets young people where they move (in school, in urban spaces, online, at the library). That is, in the contexts where it is relevant for them to be: in connection with their education, in connection with their leisure activities and interests, or hanging out with their friends. It is a universe where the young person can utilise the entire package or simply pick out elements; it is where the young person can choose whether to call it the library or Mindspot or neither. We are not the important ones – it is the young and their lives, which is the hub of the universe

- Mindspot is not a library. *Mindspot is a library offer* that focuses on what the target group finds interesting and relevant. This does not mean that we are merely a place of entertainment that offers nothing but fun and games, but rather that our offer is adjusted in a qualitative manner to the target group so they are able to see its relevance for them
- Mindspot is not merely a provider. *Mindspot generates relations between young people and the library, it generates meetings between young people and it provides a framework for the production of knowledge* by supporting self-promotion and creative processes

Mindspot the universe has been continuously expanded during the project period. The specific elements will be described and assessed in the following chapters. Several of the elements are carried on after 1 April 2009 and it will be interesting to see whether the way of thinking can continue into permanent service. The illustration of the Mindspot universe depicts the various elements, which Mindspot currently consists of. All the elements depend upon input from young people and some of the elements can be removed while others can be added on the basis of the input which we receive from the young. All the elements are cross-connected: thus events cannot be carried out without e.g. external cooperation, relations and branding. Altogether, these elements make up the library offer and universe: Mindspot.

³ From a conversation with Saif, a Mindspotter, on 10 February 2009. Quote translated.

A Question of Words...

Our names provided us with a new identity because we set out as Mindspotters and Mindkeepers and not as private individuals but it also provided us with a group identity because we were together in this⁴

Our names were an important factor in the project. In the beginning, the names were simply a natural part of the process – our offer needed a name and our young employees needed a distinctive title, which was not to be library ambassadors. Since the project along the way became more focused on being a communication project, the names became increasingly important as well. The names created an identity for us. We were the group behind and around Mindspot. We had special tasks and we developed special offers. For the people behind Mindspot, being a Mindspotter and a Mindkeeper represented new ‘job descriptions’, which entailed new tasks and a number of professional considerations.

Mindspot

Mindspot is the name of the fully evolved offer. The name was found through a contest, which was held simultaneously with the development of the physical room. Besides providing us with a good name, the event also generated great publicity because it drew attention to the fact that something was in the offing. The people behind the project have been fond of the name throughout because it gave us associations to a place that holds room for thoughts – Mindspot is a place as well as an abundance of thoughts. Also, the name indicates that we put a spotlight on one of the library’s target groups.

Mindspotters

Mindspotters are the young people who were employed in Mindspot. We chose the name because the young people are hired to spot tendencies, to spot ideas and to develop Mindspot.

Mindkeepers

As the Mindspotters took their name to heart, the group of library professionals who worked for Mindspot also needed a name. Assigning a different name to the librarians caused some discussion of the purpose – and whether there was one.

Following careful consideration, this group came to be named Mindkeepers because their most significant task was to collect the experiences and thoughts, which emerged in Mindspot and among Mindspotters.



The Mindkeepers were to make sure that the library world would be able to learn something from the conversation with young people about the library.

The project manager did not enter into the group of Mindkeepers due to several managerial reasons. The most important of these was that a hierarchical imbalance would be created between the group of Mindspotters and the group of Mindkeepers if the manager was part of one of the groups.

The Spotmobile

In the spring of 2008, Mindspot acquired its little caravan, which was going to be the mobile library offer for young people. The caravan was named The Spotmobile, which gave connotations to the name of the project as well as Batman the cartoon.

Experiences

- The intentional use of words and names in order to seize and express the project in a more precise way had an identity shaping effect. It clarified what the project was and who the people behind the project were
- Now and then, the fact that the project operated with two titles, YOUng and Mindspot, created confusion. On the one hand, this necessitated a discussion and an explanation of the relation between the two titles. On the other hand, insisting on keeping the title from the application period would confine us to a definite understanding of the project and, as a result, act restraining to the development of the project
- Everything indicates that our target group quickly became familiar with the name Mindspot. However, it was Mindspot and not the library, which was marketed. Had the purpose been to market the entire library to all

Facts

YOUng: The official title of the project

Mindspot: The name of the fully evolved offer

Mindspotter: A young project participant and ambassador

Mindkeeper: A library professional project participant

The Mindspot group: All of the employees of Mindspot

The Spotmobile: The mobile library offer

of our users, naturally, this would have been a problem. Seeing, however, as the purpose was to brand a specific library offer to a specific target group, our marketing was effective and useable.

Recommendations

- New ‘job descriptions’ can contribute to seeing one’s job from another angle and it can thereby generate a creative approach to the work being done
- A name, which does not have connotations to the library can help brand the library in a different way that may change the often biased perception of the library

⁴ Quote from a ‘stop day’ in the project in the autumn of 2008. Quote translated



A Conversation with Young People

A conversation is a process in which people who do not know about something try to reach a result through asking and answering, and in which the situation therefore all the time is that one person is no wiser than the other person and does not try to be right but rather to learn⁵

As mentioned in the chapter *Project YOUng was the Beginning*, a development in the way we contemplated our project took place during the project phase. We went from thinking of the physical offer as the core to considering communication as the very essence. This development was mainly the result of the fact that the project was divided into three elements due to the initial physical obstacles: the room in Aarhus Main Library, the cooperation with schools and the Spotmobile. This trichotomy gave rise to the need to create a connection that would enable the project to continue to be one collective unity. Understanding that communication was the essence of the project became an aha-experience, which was brought about with the help of the project evaluator. Although we had always believed that there was a connection between the various elements, it was difficult for us to explain it in exact terms. The connection between everything we did became *the conversation with the young about the library*.

We did not use a fixed definition of what can be called a conversation. Neither did we use a single form of conversation. The conversation with the young took place in various locations and on different levels. Examples were: the close co-operation with the Mindspotters and other volunteers, encounters with creative young people who contributed to our events, conversations with students, with library users and young people on the street, with participants in the book club, the events and in the various elements of our user involvement. These encounters

were all part of our conversation with the young about the library. The conversation did not just refer to the verbal conversation but was also understood as the young people's actions or lack thereof.

The conversation with the young about the library became the way in which the project worked with user-driven innovation. The conversation was meant to provide the project with continuous input to the design of a relevant library offer for the 14-20 year-olds. This was intended to give us experience in communicating with various young people in different contexts and to provide knowledge about the needs of the target group and preferably also ideas, which we would then be able to test and develop during the project period. When planning the initiatives during which the conversations were going to take place – e.g. at the events and by the Spotmobile – we discussed whether or not the library's presence should be prominent and how much we should explain about the library along the way. In practice, however, the library as a whole did not have a strong presence. This was especially due to the fact that as soon as the word 'library' was mentioned, the young people had a very fixed image in their minds of what this meant. As a result, it was very difficult to start a conversation about how the library could develop. Rather than using the conversations by the Spotmobile to ask young people to relate to the library of the future, these conversations were used to gain insight into the needs of the users. This insight was later transformed into new initiatives in the project.

It was very important to make room for the young people in the conversations. This applied to the cooperation with Mindspotters, volunteers, in the various workshops as well as in the cursory contact taking place at events, in the school cooperation and at the Spotmo-



bile. If the library staff did not make room for the young people's ideas and input, then the library would not be able to learn anything from them and the perspective for development was precisely to look beyond what the library usually does. At the same time, however, it was important that library staff as professionals as well as individuals did not feel that they had to make too many compromises in the encounter with the young. The idea was not to have the Mindkeepers be 'young with the young' but rather to generate respect in the encounter between the young people and the Mindkeepers. This respect would arise, for instance, when the relation between the concerned clearly showed that both sides had something to bring to the

table. In other connections where a brief and more cursory contact was established, this contact often took place between Mindspotters and other young people because the connection came more natural and a sense of sameness was established faster.

Furthermore, it was important that the different groups of young people were used in the right way – the amount of input and the extent of the demands, which the project made on young people had to correspond to the degree of their involvement with the project. During the project, we came across four levels of conversation with young people:

1. The Mindspotters, who were part of the group behind Mindspot. Like the Mindkeepers they were to deliver input and results to the project
2. Young people who were a part of our book projects⁶. We made use of them to carry out the specific tasks, which they had signed up for and we could also ask them to help out with other tasks
3. Young people who came up with ideas for events, who were contributors at events, or who participated in workshops. They contributed simply in connection with these specific events
4. Regular users, who either visited the library, received instructions, used the Spotmobile or the like. We could ask them to participate in user surveys but other than that, the conversation with them was mainly about paying attention to the comments they made, their actions, etc.⁷

Experiences

- Throughout the conversations with the young people, it was important to be attentive to their views and at the same time to be true to oneself
- The conversation between Mindkeepers and Mindspotters became the most profound conversation about the library but it was also a conversation, which required careful planning and negotiation of the individual roles and behaviour from the beginning
- When we were out with the Spotmobile, we received a lot of input that we could use in our work and which provided insight into the lives and needs of young people
- Entering into a conversation with young people required the group to be receptive to the issue that some are more outspoken than others. Because of this, among

other things, one criteria for hiring Mindspotters was that they had to enter into the contact directed outwards

- Both Mindspotters and Mindkeepers needed to establish trust and to build up reliability in working with the young and this was done by being unobtrusive.

Recommendations

- Generate a respectful relation to the young
- There has to be room for everyone – both the young person and the professional. The everyday activities and the project work has to take place on both their terms
- Be receptive to the input, which the young people give and take their views seriously. Nothing good will come of the library staff having a fixed idea of what the library is if the young people need something different
- Be aware of what the individual user groups can contribute and thus what can be expected of them
- Take as your starting point the real world rather than an expectation of what the library and the users should be. Refrain from attributing to the young some fixed viewpoints and perceptions beforehand

⁵ Sløk, Johannes (1995): *Begrebsforvirring*. Centrum, Denmark, p. 84. Quote translated

⁶ In the autumn of 2008 and the spring of 2009, Mindspot worked with two book projects: An editorial team consisting of two Mindspotters and eight young volunteers put together the portrait book entitled *Imprint – Young people in Aarhus*. Two Mindspotters created the book *The Project Guide* with the help of Mindspot's network. Read more in the chapters *The Library as Producer and Assistance for Young Innovators*.

⁷ Use the users in the library – 12 ideas for specific initiatives in your library (www.brugbrugerne.dk – in Danish only) points out that there are three types of users: Regular users, who often do not know what they want; active users, who often deliver feedback; and lead users/first movers, who possess innovative abilities and who are aware of what they want. Mindspot has dealt with two levels of active users because the project had both young people who were employed and received pay and young people who were 'employed' without pay.

Democracy in Practice

*Democracy is not sitting and learning about democracy. Democracy is practicing democracy...*⁸

Means for the project were applied for under the focus area 'The library as a democratic greenhouse' at the Danish Agency for Libraries and Media. Being a democracy project caused much more discussion in the project than we had anticipated. The discussions were due to the group's differing understandings of democracy – one was wide and the other narrow. One group believed that democracy is associated with politics while the other believed that democracy can also be employing a democratic working method. Seeing as it was not possible to agree on whether one or the other definition was the correct one, opinions still differ on whether we succeeded in being a democracy project, now that we have reached the end of the project. The first group believes that the democracy-part of the project became an appendix and that initiatives and events, like developing *The Project Guide*, our debate community at Arto⁹ and our participation in various campaigns, made it a democracy project. The other group believes, on the other hand, that the project succeeded in being a democracy project to a great extent because the involvement of users and the work to promote young people's opportunities to express themselves and to be creative revealed democracy in practice.

User involvement and the conversation with the young became the focal point of the democratic way of thinking in the project for the part of the group that worked with a wide understanding of the term democracy. By way of the conversation, the project attempted to create a micro-democracy. We consulted the young users on an almost consistent basis and they were thereby given the opportunity to take a stand and gain influence. This generated a form



of democracy in which the Mindspot group could not control the process 100 percent. Sometimes this had the effect that things took unexpected turns. Therefore it was important to consult the young on issues that we really wanted their answers and opinions to. We wanted to consult them because we wanted to hear their answers and were able to take action on the basis of their answers. The democratic side of this process was probably noticed and felt mainly by the Mindspot group and not to the same degree by the different groups of young people. In various processes of user involvement, e.g. idea development workshops, the Mindspot group was careful to provide the young participants with feedback on their work, but in this connection that was not sufficient because the young people were not able to observe their ideas being carried out right away (idea development for the room took place in the spring of 2007 and the room was not completed until October of 2007 when the young people had moved on to other stages of their lives).

Those young people who in the previous chapter were characterised as group one and two are the young people, who experienced being a part of a micro-democracy because they could see that their opinions and ideas in the long-term processes were just as valid as everyone else's. They felt that their ideas were carried out and their viewpoints taken note of. This was obvious among Mindspotters as well as editors of the books and the young people themselves mentioned that the democratic working method was one of the significant parts of the process.

In this project, the long-term processes that were somewhat compressed were those that provided the young people with the feeling of being part of a democracy. We know from the project MEeting YOUth¹⁰, however, that it is also possible to make young people feel part of a democracy by involving them in short but intense courses where they get the opportunity to discuss topics of political and societal character that are relevant to them¹¹.

It appears then, that by working with the types of topics that are covered by the narrow definition of democracy, short and intense processes can be carried out because this approach to democracy is based on content. When working with the wide definition of democracy, time for longer processes is needed because this is a process-oriented and value-based approach to democracy where traditional democratic topics are not necessarily on the agenda.

Experiences

- During the project, agreement could not be reached regarding the meaning we attached to the term democracy. This means that the project group in the final phase of the project is still discussing the outcome of the project on this one point

- More than once, we were on shaky ground because the project could not be planned in detail. User involvement and the running self-evaluation generated some unknown factors in the process

Recommendations:

- Do not ask the users unless you want answers. By asking questions you create an expectation that the answers will generate action and you must therefore be prepared to act and follow up on the ideas and answers of the users
- Ask precise questions (it may be necessary to ask about the library of the future without actually using the word library because the users' perception of the library of today may block creative thoughts for the library of the future)
- Give feedback to the young people who participate so they know that their input is taken seriously
- Think the process of user involvement through so you can create processes, which the young find interesting and relevant

⁸ From the Danish Minister of Education Bertel Haarder's video greeting at The Danish Youth Council's meeting of delegates on 5 December 2008. Watch the video (in Danish only) at: www.duf.dk/forside/om_duf/delegeretmoedet/videohilsen_fra_bertel_haarder/

⁹ Read more in the chapter *Virtual Meeting with Young People*.

¹⁰ Project MEeting YOUth worked to discover how to involve young people in innovation work in a suitable manner.

¹¹ Watch a film about project MEeting YOUth at: www.aakb.dk/meetingyouth (in Danish only).

Being a Mindkeeper

*Adults are blessed with the young people they deserve*¹²

Right from the beginning of the project, the project group did not deviate from the role, which other project groups have had in Aarhus Main Library. The group developed ideas, researched and searched for external collaborators. The differences between this and previous projects were that there was a fixed target group and the working method was going to be user-driven and based on networks. The idea of making contact with the young people was a challenge to the project group. How would they do this and how would the young react?

During 2007, the project group tested various contact procedures – user surveys, cooperation with classes in schools, events for and with the young as well as a mock-up¹³ in the Main Library's foyer. All of the activities provided input for the further work in the project, but the role of the project group did not truly change until the Mindspotters were added, the project group changed its name to Mindkeepers and the conversation became the overall framework.

The conversation on the different levels and with different groups of young people as well as the close cooperation with the Mindspotters became the general difference between being a Mindkeeper and a youth librarian. Having a job description in which the most significant task was conversing and collecting the experiences and thoughts which the young people expressed meant that the synergy between Mindspotters and Mindkeepers was essential. It was important to the Mindkeepers not to appear as know-it-alls who knew better than the young and we had several discussions about the actions and positions of the Mindkeepers, as well as about how much they could speak at meetings and when. At the same

time, it was important that the Mindspotters learned something from being an employee – e.g. knowledge about what it is like in a workplace, how to disseminate and how to satisfy outlined demands. It became a professional challenge to figure out how the professional and the individual behind the profession should behave in the cooperation with the young Mindspotters.

The cooperation with schools became a professional challenge for all the Mindkeepers. Conversations with teachers and internal discussions about how the Mindkeepers should act as teachers resulted in a teaching method that involved the Mindkeepers performing on the slack rope, so to speak. The role as expert had been removed, traditional teaching using a blackboard was minimised and the teaching, which was based on conversation, took as its starting point the project assignments of the students. It was a challenge for the Mindkeepers to stand face-to-face with a class and depend upon their motivation to receive lessons based on conversation.

When the Spotmobile was added in 2008, the Mindkeepers' job changed again. The form of cooperation with the Mindspotters had become a natural part of a working day and quite a few lessons had been carried out in connection with the cooperation with schools but now the Mindkeepers had to become increasingly outreaching, which became a personal challenge to them. This new role meant that people to a greater extent saw the person behind the profession because the Mindkeepers found themselves in unaccustomed surroundings, different from the usual and secure library setting. At the same time, the situation was also different and unaccustomed in the sense that the role to a greater extent involved entertaining, branding and communicating in a here-and-now situation. In this way, it became the Mindkeepers'

task to be a 'street librarian' and perceiving this role to be just as important and legitimate as solving a need for knowledge required some getting used to.

Generally, being a Mindkeeper did not just become a professional, but also a personal task because the conversation with the young people in various connections took up a lot of time. This was combined with demands of flexibility, the ability to arrange events, drive a car with a caravan attached, disseminate the project, decorate a room etc.

Experiences

- The Mindkeepers were very conscious of their roles in the contexts, which they were part of. They have developed from this in a professional as well as a personal way
- The Mindkeepers took part in the project for up to two years where they worked part-time in the project. This added a lot of manpower and continuity to the project but it was also necessary to make some replacements in the group and sparring with the Mindspotters and network contacts was also necessary in order to make sure that the Mindkeepers bore in mind the perspective for development
- The many hours, which the Mindkeepers had to invest in the project had the effect that they sometimes felt divided between the project and daily operations in the rest of the library
- The cooperation with schools developed the professional competences of the Mindkeepers the most but it was the cooperation with young people and the outreaching work, which resulted in the greatest personal development
- At times it was difficult for the other staff of the library to find out what the Mindkeepers were doing and this put pressure on the Mindkeepers



Recommendations

- Mixing library staff with other professional groups and the user groups of the library provides greater width in the library perspectives
- It is not just the age of the library employee but their approach to the youth, which is important in the cooperation with young people
- In the association with young people, professional as well as human competences are significant
- Employees must dare to have opinions and become involved but this does not necessarily mean that the employee as a private individual should be in front
- The employees should be prepared for irregular working hours and tasks

¹² The ad hoc group 'Library Service of Young People' (2004): *Bibliotekerne og de unge – Vil de os og vil vi dem?*, Gentofte Libraries, Gentofte, p. 11. Quote translated.

¹³ Mock-ups are early prototypes, which the users test and give the developers feedback relating to functionality and user-friendliness: www.interaction-design.org/encyclopedia/mock-ups.html
In project YOUnge we put together a quick set-up of a youth library, where we observed whether the young embraced a different library decor.



Mindspot = Mindspotters

It has been our strength that we are a composite group – some are older and have more experience and we are young and inexperienced – and there hasn't been any top-down management. We have all been equal¹⁴

The cooperation with the Mindspotters was to become the most profound conversation with young people about the library. This conversation started in the autumn of 2007 when the project searched for those young people who were to form the core group and who were to create and develop as well as be communicators between young people and the library. The Mindspotters were found by means of job adverts and they worked on the project seven hours a week for a year and a half. Writing the job advert was a bit of a balancing act seeing as it had to express the need for specific competences but at the same time, it had to convey that we had not determined what was going to take place and how the work was to be carried out. The young people were going to help define this. In the advert, we searched for young library ambassadors with the subtitle Mindspotters. When the group of young people was assembled for only the second time, they used the term Mindspotters about themselves.

A group of young people who were very different as individuals and who had different interests and competences were chosen for the project. Some were very interested in films, others in music and one in politics. One dreamt of becoming a journalist and one about becoming a photographer. They were thus young people with an interest in cultural, democratic, or educative elements. In the selection process, the young people who described themselves as book-worms who loved the library were rejected. This was also the case with the young people who did not seem outgoing and confident. This was done

in an attempt to ensure the potential for development in the project.

This does not mean that the young people who we selected did not have an opinion about the library. They applied, after all, for a job as library ambassadors. The group of young people who were chosen for the job was able to see a potential for innovation in what they considered an important and necessary cultural institution, but which they also considered insufficient in relation to their lives and the lives of their friends. Along with the opportunity for an interesting after-school job where they would be able to cultivate their interests and the opportunity to put something attractive on their CV, this was the incentive for the Mindspotters. They have been dedicated to the project and have worked hard for it. As one of them says: *'We love this job'*.

At no point in the project did the Mindspotters have a clearly defined job description. When they started out, they were told that they were to create a youth library in cooperation with the Mindkeepers within the physical and financial framework, which was available. The task was a bit of a gamble because it could turn out that the framework was too wide for the Mindspotters to navigate and the challenge could be too great. It was also a possibility that the project group constellation would not work because of the encounter across different ages, educational backgrounds, competences and interests. This was not the case, however, and it can be ascertained that no Mindspot would exist without the Mindspotters. At the same time, it can be ascertained that the selection of Mindspotters was crucial. It is important to choose young people who have something on their mind, who are able to challenge one another as well as the library and who will profit from participating. One of the Mindspotters said, shortly after

being hired: *'Oh, if I hadn't got this job, I would be sitting at the check-out counter in the ALTA supermarket right now'*.

A few months after joining the project, one of the Mindkeepers declared: *'They have a lot of energy. They talk before they think – in a cool way – and they are spontaneous'*. This was a significant reason why the Mindspotters were so vital to the project. There was no need for long and unsuccessful idea development processes because minds were quickly made up on whether it was a good idea or a bad one. The Mindspotters were quick to say whether events would be able to attract participants or not, whether a layout would work or not, whether they would be able to get in touch with the target group and so on.

The Mindspotters had many different roles and tasks in the project: they developed ideas, were coordinators on events and carried out events, bought materials, wrote articles, made films, handled our book club and debates on Arto, acted as editors on *The Project Guide* and *Imprint*, carried out outreaching work in city squares and at beaches, drove with the caravan attached, participated in workshops, handled evaluations and many more tasks. They accepted the tasks with a lot of drive and even though they were not equally enthusiastic about everything, they contributed to it because all of the tasks were a part of being an employee of Mindspot.

Hiring the Mindspotters was a challenge. Not just in the development process itself, but also in an organisational sense. Questions arose on what keys they were allowed to have, whether they should be invited to staff arrangements and how they should be introduced to the other staff members. At the same time it became a challenge to build up a communication structure because the Mindspotters did not have work-related e-mail addresses and we needed to create a community where everyone

knew what everyone else was doing even though we only saw each other once in a while. This communication structure had to be so easily accessible, clear and quick to use, that teenagers who were not used to communicating in a group without convening would also use it. Google Docs turned out to be a great tool in this connection because it was already utilised by the young. Communication was a persistent challenge, however, because so many things were constantly going on.

Experiences

- We primarily hired young people who found the library boring but who were interested in making it more exciting
- We looked for young people with different qualifications – being young was not qualification enough in itself
- The Mindspotters became a group of very different young people whose only common foundation was that they were now Mindspotters
- The criteria for failure became when the Mindspotters would say 'That is what we usually do' or 'it is always like that'
- Even though the Mindkeepers and the project manager tried hard to integrate the Mindspotters in Aarhus Main Library, we did not manage in a sufficient degree to persuade the other members of staff to accept them
- The cooperation with the young was time-consuming and demanded patience as well as enthusiasm. In the long run it was just as rewarding as it was time-consuming but in the short run it took time
- At times the Mindspotters felt stressed by the pressure of time and it was difficult for them to attend to their school and education as well as their job as a Mindspotter



Recommendations

- Consider thoroughly whether user groups should be hired for short or long terms. There are advantages and disadvantages to both alternatives. For instance, short employments entail a lot of resource-demanding phasing-in processes while long employments entail the risk of institutionalisation
- Hire employees (both library professional staff and young employees) for only short periods of time. Every employee ages and becomes increasingly institutionalised, which makes it difficult to stay at eye level with the young users.
- Do not hire young users if the institution that you are

- a part of is not ready for it. Make room for the young people and provide them with opportunities to act and to create
- It is essential for the success of the cooperation with the young that a group of young people with different competences, interests and personalities is established
- Do not choose young people who resemble the rest of the library staff because diversity can promote development and the idea is for the young to develop the library into a more relevant place for young people

¹⁴ From a conversation with the Mindspotters Christian and Søren on 8 January 2009. Quote translated.



The Library as Producer

The best part about making Imprint is that we are allowed to become better at what we like to work with and that we are allowed to meet and cooperate with all kinds of different people¹⁵

One of the reasons why the project hired young people with various communication skills was that we were looking to produce a conversation that generated space in the library for volunteer work and production. We wanted to work with user-generated content and creative learning processes by providing the opportunity for young communication. During the project, the library often produced various forms of materials. The Mindspotters were in charge of producing films and articles about the project's events and they produced Spot of the Month – a promotion of young up-and-coming bands from Aarhus. Especially the latter generated a different approach to the library because young bands applied to us, wanting to become *Spot of the Month* and thereby to be seen in the context of the library.

The most comprehensive productions, however, were the two books: *The Project Guide* and *Imprint*. Volunteers were involved with creating the books in various ways. Both projects lead to book publications but they were very diverse books with completely different contents and processes¹⁶.

Volunteer efforts in Mindspot

The most comprehensive production project was Mindspot's portrait book: *Imprint*. This involved editorial staff consisting of ten young people: eight volunteers between the ages of 15 and 20 and two Mindspotters.

The process began when the Mindspot group changed the project goal from creating a youth magazine to creating a book about young people in Aarhus. Two Mindspotters were appointed editor and journalistic editor, respectively.

Subsequently, we advertised for budding journalists, graphic designers and photographers who would be interested in volunteering for the project. Via their applications, portfolios and interviews, applicants had to show that they had the abilities and the will to cooperate with other young people to complete a large project with a tight deadline.

We did not have many applicants for the spots and it took some time before the editorial team was large enough, but along the way in the selection of the editors for the book, some young people were also rejected because we did not find them sufficiently qualified or because we estimated that they would not have enough time to spend on the project.

The project was primarily a youth-to-youth project seeing as the library staff interfered as little as possible. Instead, the library staff functioned as sparring partners throughout the process and they handled many formal issues.

The editors decided that it was going to be a portrait book. They chose the young people who were going to be portrayed and the angles of the stories. In cooperation with the library's graphic designer they chose the format etc. of the book. The two Mindspotters were responsible for the project and its progress. They were also in charge of making sure that the volunteers delivered what they were meant to; that the roles they had, fitted them; and that they felt comfortable.

When we ask the volunteers today about what was good about the process and what made them spend so many hours making *Imprint*, they highlight the opportunity to work with the interests, which they would like to work with in the future as well. They also highlight, however, the fact that they took part in a democratic working process with other young people in which they made various decisions together. They mention that they had a lot of fun and

that there was room for cosy and social events, e.g. work weekends, but that the screening process had also made them feel chosen and obliged to the project even though they were often pressed for time¹⁷.

The library orchestrates

It is mentioned in the report *REACH OUT!* by the Danish Ministry of Culture that the users have become increasingly active and co-creative. At the same time, culture creates open processes: *'This provides...new possibilities to utilise, facilitate and 'orchestrate' the interaction with the users consciously in an artistic or professional development process with a view to generating improved quality'*¹⁸. The book editors realised that it is possible for the library to orchestrate the interaction by constructing the framework for young people to meet on a voluntary basis to create something together. The young people met once a week for seven months, participated in three work weekends and worked for many hours in addition to that without getting paid. The only payment they received was food, social intercourse and the opportunity to write a book with other young people. The question is, of course, whether the process led to an artistic or a professional development of the library. We believe that it did. Besides the fact that a number of young people (the editors and the young people who the editors were in contact with) were given a different story to tell about the library, we also made the concept of general education active by providing the young people with a voice and, at the same time, we actively created culture rather than just referring to it by using user-generated content.

Experiences

- By spending time and resources on 'interviews' with the volunteer applicants, by looking at their portfolios and

revealing our expectations, we showed them that we took their skills and the time they spent seriously

- The young were attracted by the project because it gave them the opportunity to become better at something, which they would like to work with in future
- It was a significant reason for the success of the portrait book that our project managers – two Mindspotters – were very dedicated to the project. This generated commitment in the remainder of the group as well
- Another significant reason was that everyone in the group was at eyelevel.
- We estimate that two significantly older project managers would not have been able to carry out the same process because a hierarchy might easily have developed in the group and the social elements would have functioned in a different manner

Recommendations

- Take the volunteers seriously – do not waste their time
- Make the volunteers feel comfortable and do not forget to say 'thank you'
- Volunteers also need support from the management and they must be encouraged at least as much as regular employees
- Volunteers must feel that they have a voice in the cooperation and that they are part of the big picture and of a democratic working process
- The volunteers must be able to gain something from their work – in terms of competences, social intercourse, with regards to their CV, special privileges and so on
- If the reason for applying for a volunteer position is simply a wish to improve the CV, then the motivation is not sufficiently strong. It is not the CV, which leads to the interest but rather the interest that leads to the CV



- Make demands on the volunteers, but as mentioned in the chapter *A Conversation with Young People*, you must be mindful of the demands that you make on the various user groups

¹⁵ Stated at one of the editorial meetings for the portrait book in January, 2009. Quote translated.

¹⁶ Read about the process of creating *The Project Guide* in the chapter *Assistance for Young Innovators*.

¹⁷ Read the description by the book editors of their work on: www.mindspot.dk/aftryk (in Danish only).

¹⁸ The Danish Ministry of Culture (2008): *REACH OUT!*, Copenhagen, p. 17. Quote translated.

Assistance for Young Innovators

*If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea*¹⁹

From the beginning of the project, we aimed at supporting young people and young people's ideas and initiatives. This was implied in the idea of creating the project as a micro-democracy, supporting young people's self-promotion and working under the slogan 'Make it your Library'²⁰. However, it was also included more explicitly in the goal on creating a project handbook. The conversation, which Mindspot should initiate thus became sparring on young people's projects and a common process of creation, as Mindspot sought to motivate young people and provide guidance on initiatives, which were to take place away from the library.

A network was created around a group of young innovators and Mindspot took part in events such as *I Do Art* (a festival created by young people to promote young art in Aarhus). We made the library available for the shooting of films, but we also lent items for young people's events. Actual project sparring was provided for two projects: *Revista Revue* and *KULToUR*, which received assistance with writing a project description and with developing a library metaphor in an integration project, respectively. They were also loaned various equipment.

The Project Guide

The preparation of *The Project Guide* became the most extensive process on project sparring in Mindspot. The guide is a handbook consisting of tips and tricks for young people on the issues they need to consider as young project visionaries in Aarhus.



The work involved in making *The Project Guide* was organised in a different way than on the book *Imprint*. It did not involve a group of editors who discussed and carried out the work. The process was primarily organised by two Mindspotters who were responsible for creating the process and collecting and editing material for the book. During this process, an existing network was used; time was not spent on finding a new network as was the case with the portrait book. This existing network participated in several network meetings where idea development regarding the content was carried out. Subsequently, a number of project visionaries contributed content to the guide either as articles with good advice or as portraits of their projects in inspirational articles. Others contributed photos or gave feedback on the collected materials.

The process was not approached as a continuous social process with frequent meetings and close contact. In working with the book *Imprint*, young people met to be together while at the same time improving their com-

petences within their areas of interest (writing, graphic design or photography). The people involved with making *The Project Guide* all contributed to a common interest, which they had positive experiences with: Creating projects. Mindspot's focus on the two book projects has thus differed widely: the production of *Imprint* was centred on the work process and the involvement of volunteers. In creating *The Project Guide*, content was essential since the book would serve as a tool for young project visionaries and the content of that book pointed directly to the core of Mindspot: Enabling young people's self-promotion and self-development.

The Project Guide thus became the most important component of the reflections in connection with 'Make it your library' because the aim of the book was to motivate young people and provide them with tools to influence their society – in other words: to influence the democracy that they are a part of. *The Project Guide* consequently became a very serious component in Mindspot because its content was meant to reach far beyond the project period and because it was meant to strengthen Mindspot's focus on project sparring after the completion of YOUng.

The Project Guide became a book, a website and a wiki where a lot of information/guidance was concentrated in one place. It was a process, which created a product for a particular target group initiated by the library. At the same time, however, it was a product open to continued development and improvement as young project visionaries are encouraged to improve and update the content of the wiki after the end of the project as well.

Experiences

- A strong network was created with the project visionaries that Mindspot came in contact with. Still, Mindspot

would have liked to cooperate with even more young innovators

- A great deal of fieldwork was required in order to persuade young project visionaries to contribute to *The Project Guide*. This may have been because the young were very busy or it may be because they did not benefit enough from participating

Recommendations

- Good project sparring requires a competent project visionary who knows the city
- Offering project sparring falls in line with the core concept of libraries: it is educative, promotes democracy and strengthens cultural development
- Use and supplement the existing network. It is not always necessary to develop new networks

¹⁹ de Saint-Exupery, Antoine, (1986): *Citadellet*, Lindhardt og Ringhof, Copenhagen, Denmark

²⁰ Read more in the chapter *Make it your Library*.

To be Young in a Corner

Mindspot is way cool. Have already spent several afternoons there. So cool! Great initiative.

Annoying light in Mindspot – makes my eyes hurt²¹

As mentioned previously, the project originally wanted to create a physical youth library away from Aarhus Main Library. We wanted to create a place for learning, being and developing, which was not limited by physical frames and preconceived perceptions about the library. However, this was not possible and in November of 2007, we therefore opened Mindspot's room in the Main Library after a long period of homelessness.

Because it took such a long time to reach clarity about the physical frames, we had to conduct more talks with various young people about interior design than originally planned. The first step of the development conversation consisted of a user survey in which young people were asked to submit three suggestions for making the library



cool. The responses formed the basis of a mock-up where the foyer of the library was transformed into a young environment. Subsequently, a workshop was held during which young people created an idea catalogue on the library of the future. Based on this catalogue, two designer teams consisting of students from Aarhus Academy developed proposals for the design of the room, logo and other promotional materials. Finally, Mindspot's room was established in cooperation between an interaction designer, two students of architecture and the library staff.

Mindspot's room was used by young people who wanted a place in the library where they could hang out and have a nice time together – watching videos on YouTube, playing air hockey, reading, doing homework and participating in our book club. We received a lot of positive feedback on the design of the room and on the fact that young people now had their own space. Without the long process of user involvement, we would not have been able to establish the room. By observing young people's actions in the room, we also received a lot of input on what worked and what did not regarding design, location of the room, use of displays etc. In other words, without the conversation with young people in connection with the development and subsequently after the room was opened, we would have created just another classic youth corner in the library.

Originally, the idea behind the room was to establish a charming environment with enough room to be young, but during the phase of concept development we had noticed a statement from social worker Freddy Meyers: *'Who on earth would care to step into a corner to be young?'*²². Thus, we wanted to establish a room, which on the one hand did not drive young people into a corner and on the other hand did not make an exhibit of them. Unfortunately,

ly, the only room available in the library was both small and located in a place that did not make it a natural part of the rest of the library. This meant that we only fulfilled one of our visions – the location did not signal that the young were a natural and welcome part of the library.

In the project, we expected to reach young people through the new room and the fact that we would provide instructions in film-, photo- and music editing, events and a range of daily activities, but these plans failed. This was partly due to the size of the room, which allowed room for only a few types of events; and partly due to the offers of guidance, which were either not visible enough or not relevant for the target group (we, in the project, lean towards the latter explanation, as young people generally experiment with the necessary software themselves).

In many ways, the Mindspot room caused difficulties in the project. First of all because it was a challenge to find a room, secondly because it was a challenge to make the project work in the available room. However, due to these difficulties, the project developed in ways it would not have if the Mindspot group had not experienced these challenges. We no longer think of space as a physical core, but rather consider it on several levels: space in the library and outside the library, space as a physical, mental and virtual element. The essence in establishing a room for young people is to ensure room for social activity, development and for being a teenager.

Experiences

- The idea catalogue, which was created, showed that young people both want an increased digitisation and automation of library functions and an urban space with atmosphere, spirit and comfort
- We established a room, which many young people liked,

but we feel that it would have worked better if we had been less isolated and more integrated in the library

- Many young people were happy to be given their own room, which was completely different from the rest of the library
- Many young people used the room to hang out and as a combined homework and comfortable zone. We were planning to have instructions, workshops and similar events, but that did not work out. The room was too small for events
- What worked well was that the room was different with exquisite IT and furniture that appealed to the target group
- Because the room was rather remote, we had quite a few problems with vandalism

Recommendations

- A physical manifestation is necessary. There has to be a place where young people feel welcome and where there is room for them; a room that can be the centre of meetings and activities
- Pay attention to where you place the youth space. Young people are noisier than adults, they talk louder, they take up more space – and this must be recognised and allowed
- Remember that young people do not care to be 'young in a corner'. But they like to be able to hide away and be on their own
- Establishing a room for young people is also about creating an environment and an emotional space where they feel welcome

²¹ Comments from the library's 'Suggestion Box'. Quote translated.

²² The ad hoc group 'Library Service of Young People' (2004): *Bibliotekerne og de unge – Vil de os og vil vi dem?*, Gentofte Libraries, Gentofte, p. 8. Quote translated.



Young Performers

Being young today means on the one hand disappearing in the crowd and on the other being an icon – with extreme visibility²³

During the project, a wide range of events were held because we wanted to examine what types of events would work in relation to the target group, how we could provide the target group with a new perception of the library, and because we hoped to come in contact with scores of young people through these events.

Various types of events were held with the common denominator that ideas should come from young people and young people should be active either by performing or participating in other ways. In other words, the users should create the events. This approach to events was chosen in order to advance conversation with young people by involving them and allowing them room to act, train and self-promote. By training we are primarily referring to competences, which the young people can use in their spare time but which may also rub off during their education, e.g. playing music, making films, reading and mediating gained information, writing and playing computer²⁴.

Both the Mindspotters and our external networks played a significant role in the planning of most of the events. Mindspotters provided many of the ideas for events. With assistance from Mindkeepers, Mindspotters took on the role of coordinator for the individual events. This process proved very efficient, as Mindkeepers could quickly determine whether an idea was good or not, and because the network contributed a long range of competences, which we did not possess. The working method also had a developing effect on both Mindspotters and Mindkeepers. The Mindspotters were given responsibili-

ties, which included coordination and delivery at a given deadline. The Mindkeepers should enter into new cooperation relations and steer new tasks.

We are generally satisfied with the events. They were well-attended by various types of young people, and we gathered a wide range of experiences about arranging library events for the young. One of the essential experiences was that we needed to find a delicate balance between establishing a tradition for the events and at the same time ensuring a continuous development. Many things become easier already the second time an event is planned. We used these resources to qualify the development, which was necessary to keep up with the ever-changing youth culture. Cooperation with networks and input from young people ensured dynamics, while the library ensured tradition.

During the project, it became apparent that it was useful to focus very specifically on separate forms of culture or media. One example was computer events. The events that focused on one game and thus in one gaming community received fine media publicity and were well-attended, whereas events with the option to play a number of different games received neither media publicity nor attracted many participants. It is the experience of the project that events where the library worked with one specific target group worked far better than events which were aimed at presenting e.g. games as broadly as possible and to as broad a target group as possible. By working with a specific area of interest, we also gained the communicative opportunity to have direct contact with the community of interests with which we wanted contact. Thus, it became centred on the specific interest and not the age of participants.

Communication turned out to be alpha and omega in planning a successful event because communication brought an audience, and in Mindspot's case performers, to the events. Communication did not necessarily mean a large PR-budget. It was a question of giving both networks and young people a share in the event and motivating them to act as spokespersons for the event. For instance, we had bands contacting us to inquire whether they could play at an event and we saw young bands attracting large audiences themselves. In this way, an efficient channel of communication was established.

Through our events, we thus tried to transform the young people into performers both by letting them perform, coordinate, market and leave their mark on events and by ensuring that they were a part of the scope or a community of interests where they did not stand out but had something in common with the others.

Experiences

- Events were successful when young people were allowed to show what they were capable of and when they were active participants
- In regard to computer events, it was our experience that it was better to focus on one particular computer game rather than turning the event into a presentation of many games
- Focusing on one particular interest rather than one particular age group worked better. For instance, all age groups are represented among World of Warcraft-players.

Recommendations

- Do not make events for all interest groups at once – target specific groups!

- Coordinate events together with young people and other networks. They have the proper PR-channels and the knowledge and expertise needed
- Ensure that the young promote the events themselves. Better advertising does not exist
- Making unorthodox events in unorthodox ways works well
- Be aware that setting up technical equipment is time-consuming.

23 The ad hoc group 'Library Service of Young People' (2004): *Bibliotekerne og de unge – Vil de os og vil vi dem?*, Gentofte Libraries, Gentofte, p. 6. Quote translated.

24 View a list of events in the project at: www.mindspot.dk/det-skete (in Danish only).



The Spotmobile Sets Out

Damn, it's hot at the beach during the summer holidays. It's nice that you deliver shade, music, books and all round good times. Kasper²⁵

In the spring of 2008, Mindspot launched its mobile service, the Spotmobile – a small caravan decorated with unorthodox pictures in bright colours. Our intention was not to create a new mobile library but rather a young lounge library, which was to appear in various places where young people meet. Therefore, IT and facilities were crucial when planning the interior and content and room for literary materials was less crucial. The windows were replaced by big screens, which were used for Nintendo Wii, films etc. The set-up around the caravan included bean bags, laptops with mobile Internet access, music from speakers, a limited supply of books for lending and coffee table books and magazines.

The Spotmobile thus brought the library as a drop-in spot and meeting place to the squares of the city, the beach, festivals and even indoor events at the city's art gallery ARoS as well as hip hop events. Materials brought along with the Spotmobile varied depending on the event in which we participated. For music events, we brought magazines and books on music; for art events we brought art materials, easels, paint and canvases. We generally had many visitors and we quite often saw queues form in front of the Wii with Guitar Hero.

When the Spotmobile set out, it was manned by Mindspotters and Mindkeepers – Mindkeepers never went alone, whereas the Mindspotters from time to time ventured out on their own. The combination worked well in relation to the young users, as they were met at eye level. In the project, we discussed whether the Mindkeepers were 'street librarians', library sales representatives or library

ambassadors; a question, which we never found a definite answer to. But the task implied the ability to be extrovert, service-minded and to meet people with a smile without seeming importunate. The Mindkeepers were to contribute to opening the eyes of young library users and young non-users to the fact that the library was okay and could be used in connection with other things than writing assignments.

Before we set out with the Spotmobile for the first time, we expected to have conversations with the young people about the library and ideas for the library of the future. The conversations did not contribute a lot of new ideas for our further work, but we accomplished a conversation with many young people through our various offers that were easy to read. They participated in our competitions, painted in our visitors' book and on canvases, and we often heard the question: 'What is going on here?'. At the same time, we generated a lot of PR, which contributed to branding Mindspot.

Experiences

- The Spotmobile was an excellent eye-catcher. It was designed by a young artist and a young graphic designer and it therefore sent out different signals from the ones usually associated with the library. It was alluring and aroused curiosity
- We did not put our association with the library on display, but we had plenty of opportunity to tell the users that we were from the library. That brought about a lot of positive and amusing encounters with people
- In most places, we received many users and we witnessed how the Spotmobile became the centre of meetings across generations
- Bringing varying materials and making contests worked well



- Apart from the Wii, our bean bags, large visitors' book with felt-tip pens and the laptops were the most used items in the Spotmobile
- The Spotmobile was recognised by young people and many linked it to Mindspot at Aarhus Main Library. It thus became an outpost of the library. It was a significant publicity stunt
- Lending materials was possible, but it was not on our agenda as such. Our agenda was to give the young a different experience with the library – and it worked

- Our set-up was very dependent on the weather as the activities took place outside the caravan rather than inside it
- We experienced increasing interest from external co-operation partners and they were eager to include us in their events
- The fact that the library was represented in unexpected situations sent an important signal, as it showed young people that the library is many different things – and more than young people imagined it to be

Recommendations

- Meet the users in situations where they have the time and opportunity to use the services
- Being part of the townscape provides a lot of good publicity
- It is effective to take part in events or to show up in places where something else is happening and where people are already gathered
- When creating an outreaching service for young people, it is a huge advantage to have young people from the project join you
- A mobile offer can be used for a broader target group than we did, but remember that the broader the target group the harder it is to send a clear signal
- Refrain from trying to bring the entire library with you in your mobile unit. If you want to create an interest in various library services then bring along a few at a time
- A 'street library' requires staff, which is flexible, both when it comes to tasks, working hours and in meetings with other people

²⁵ Written in the Spotmobile's visitors' book on 29 July 2008. Entry translated.

Virtual Meeting with Young People

Mindspot: Hi, Have you considered whether the financial crisis will affect you personally?

*Moon-Spawn: Naturally, I follow the crisis closely, as part of my child savings account has been placed in shares. Fortunately, the danish banking system seems well-equipped to handle the crisis but I cannot help thinking 'what if'. Sooner or later the situation must right itself; I just hope 'jyske bank' does not go bankrupt because then I'll loose 50 percent of my savings... deep shit :-)*²⁶

In the original project description, a part of the resources were allocated to creating a large and comprehensive community on the Internet, but early in the process we became conscious of a wide range of challenges. We had two major considerations regarding content: First, the fact that we were to address two major target groups (young people and the project's professional stakeholders) and secondly, whether it would be possible to create an updated and relevant community for young people without using all available resources in the project. At the same time, we needed a community, which was easy to work with both technically and safety-wise. Thus, we chose to create two entry points to Mindspot ourselves:

- www.aakb.dk/mindspot – a site on Aarhus Public Libraries' official website became the project website, where we addressed cooperation partners and stakeholders. This site was managed by a Mindkeeper.
- www.mindspot.dk became a blog for addressing the young people. We chose the blog as our medium because technically it was easy to work with and it provided excellent options for interaction. Choosing a blog meant that all Mindspotters could create content and update the site. This made the site dynamic.

Apart from these two entry points, we used several of the existing web 2.0 communities and they proved to be easy and useful interfaces. The obvious advantage was that we were represented and came into contact with young people in the communities where they were already active. Thus, it was possible to promote Mindspot without a massive amount of legwork.

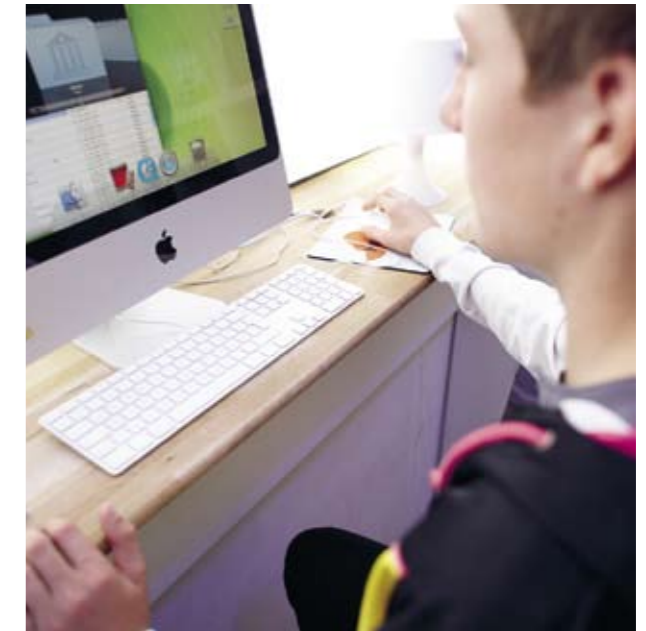
- www.myspace.com/mindspotdk was used in connection with Spot of the Month, which was thus visible both in our room, on the blog and at myspace.com.
- www.youtube.com/mindspotdk was used to show films from our events and presentation films about Mindspot. Some of the films were used for events; others were shown in the Mindspot room, by the Spotmobile and on our blog.
- www.flickr.com/photos/mindspot/ was our photo gallery. We had some photos on our blog but even more on flickr, because we found that flickr was a good showcase.
- www.facebook.com was used for multiple purposes. Facebook was used to promote our various events and it was our experience that invitations for our events were spread widely. Facebook was also used more actively as a tool for the editors behind the Mindspot portrait book.
- www.arto.dk was used as a community for debate, since we chose to ask current questions about society and let Arto's users discuss the topics without further intervention from us. We received quite a few replies on our de-

bates, which dealt with e.g. sex for payment, problems at Christiania, biker war and the financial crisis.

Conversations between the project and young people via the Mindspot websites and other communities differed depending on which community was used. The most active conversations were in connection with debates on Arto, votes on the Mindspot Film Marathon and Spot of the Month. That is, young people were most active when they had something on their minds.

Experiences

- We chose to establish a blog due to its comments option and because it was easy to use technically, which made it possible for Mindspotters and Mindkeepers to update and deliver content without the need for too much training
- The structure of the blog was established in cooperation between a Mindspotter and a Mindkeeper. All Mindspotters helped keeping the blog updated
- The Mindkeepers left the communication on other communities to the Mindspotters, because it then became their own responsibility to present their offers
- Being represented on the various communities was a good showcase for Mindspot and the communities thus contributed to the project. Arto was the community, which matched our use of communities the least. However, it was both interesting and educational, and if the library should not start debates, then who should?
- Working with communities on the Internet can be difficult as a strict legislation on copy right and personal data hinders young people's ideas and options for expressing themselves on the web



Recommendations

- If you want to establish a website for young people, it must be easy to find. Finding a specific site on libraries' websites is often difficult
- Due to security rules and special website-programmes, it is often problematic to use the library's own website if the aim is to establish a website, which can easily be changed and updated
- Do not spend time creating your own communities. Utilise the communities that the young already use.

²⁶ Debate on Arto on 10 October 2008. The reply is from the chatter Moon-Spawn. Entry translated.



Focusing on Information

*Well, it's a website, so what they write must be true*²⁷

As mentioned in the introduction, the cooperation with the schools of Aarhus became one of the three most significant elements in project YOUNg and thus in Mindspot. The teaching, which was carried out solely by Mindkeepers, turned out to be the element, which proved most difficult to integrate with the rest of Mindspot. Over time, however, it became apparent that the teaching offered contact with many young people, who neither the library nor Mindspot would otherwise have reached, and it thus became yet another interface in the Mindspot universe.

During the project, several forms of cooperation with schools and youth education programmes and between various teams of library professionals as teachers were tested. We worked with various classes and approaches to teaching. Furthermore, different types of PR were tested and a folder, *Use Your Head*, was produced and handed out to the students.

Based on these experiences, the Mindkeepers developed a concept for Mindspot's lessons, which differed from the traditional library presentation. Partly because the Mindkeepers taught only information searching and source criticism targeted at the individual classes and only at the exact time when the students were writing papers. Partly because the lessons were carried out as a conversation and because examples were used, which were based on the students' current assignments. And partly because Mindspot's lessons were considered an outreaching service at the schools. In other words, Mindspot focused on information and not on the library.

The project taught the 7th to 10th grades as well as all high school classes. Lessons were carried out both based on the students' own examples and assignments

and as a more general introduction to searching, where the library provided the examples. The process showed that students' level of motivation peaked when they were embarking on a school paper and the Mindspot concept thus worked best in the 8th and 9th grades and in the 2nd and 3rd years of high school.

In the beginning of the project, a 'menu' was made showing all the various courses offered (e.g. photo- and film editing). However, only information searching was in demand and when the offer of lessons was posted on *SkoleKom*,²⁸ so many classes responded that a waiting list had to be established.

In order to catch their attention when young people were most motivated, lessons had to be carried out in the weeks leading up to the deadline for their problem statements. This required flexibility on the part of the library, especially during January, October and November.

Of the conversations in the project, the conversation that we had with the students and their teachers via the school cooperation was the one, which came closest to a traditional professional library conversation. The conversation was centred on information searching and was thus based on the core competence of the libraries. However, the project attempted to push the boundaries of the traditional concept of library presentations through the conversation. This approach turned out to be successful: *'I think that not only the students learned something today; it seems us teachers learned too'*²⁹.

Experiences

- The students knew much less about information searching than we expected



- Traditional library presentations did not prepare students adequately, among other things because students were not motivated
- Students were only motivated when they were due to deliver problem statements. Therefore, we saw the best results in the 8th and 9th grades and in the 2nd and 3rd years of high school
- We established teams of tutors based on both professional and personal competences
- The commitment of the individual teacher was essential for the cooperation, entering into contracts, and peace, quiet and motivation in the classroom
- Tailoring the teaching for each grade worked well
- All classes were very motivated for the lessons on source criticism
- Teaching at the schools in the students' own environment worked well, as they assumed the role of hosts

Recommendations

- Be prepared to respond when the need arises; when students are due to hand in their problem statements

- Ensure that you have one single contact at each school. The contact must be the first entry point and contact to the various classes and must provide contact information on respective teachers for the library
- Make clear agreements with the teachers and make demands: It is a cooperation between school and library in which the teacher is pedagogically responsible while the librarian carries the didactic responsibility. It should not be considered a free period for the teacher, as it is not the librarian's job to ensure peace and order in the classroom
- Being two tutors generates a good dynamism. The tutors must venture to make the teaching based on conversation and have the students' examples from assignments as their starting point rather than examples prepared at the library
- It is important to prioritise source criticism. Use relevant websites, e.g. the school's own website, as a starting point
- It is better to deal with three databases in depth than to merely scratch the surface of six databases
- Do not attempt to introduce students to the entire library – it is too overwhelming
- Technical equipment must be checked and operational before the teaching commences. You cannot take for granted that the teacher will see to this without being asked specifically
- When teaching at schools, be aware that both students and teachers have access to the databases used in the tuition.

27 Stated by a student in connection with a course in source criticism in the autumn of 2007. Quote translated.

28 SkoleKom is the largest e-mail- and conference system in Denmark for teachers. www.skolekom.dk (in Danish only).

29 Stated by a teacher whose class had just had a visit by the Mindkeepers in November of 2008. Quote translated.



Make it your Library

*Library without mummy's consent. Library Punk. Sex, libraries and rock 'n' roll. Check out the hot librarian. Library on speed*³⁰

Marketing is quite often the Achilles heel of the libraries. The libraries offer a multitude of services, which are unknown to the users and the attempts to attract attention to these often seem to be drowned out by the mass of advertisements that citizens receive³¹. The project was aware of this fact, and from the start, focus was on gaining experience with branding Mindspot among the target group. The goals were to bring about a change in the target group's perception of the library and to make Mindspot known as a relevant offer for young people in Aarhus. We think we succeeded in reaching these goals.

Marketing was considered throughout the formation of Mindspot. User involvement in itself created PR value because the user initiatives generated attention on the fact that something new was in the making. This held true for both the user involvement on the design of the Mindspot room in Aarhus Main Library and in relation to the development of activities, which were to take place during the project.

Apart from user involvement, other initiatives served as PR for Mindspot: the visits to schools, the events, the network activities and the Spotmobile. Acknowledging that we partly needed to reach out widely to influence the target group and partly needed to be eye-catchers in many different contexts, we attempted to create a broad repertoire of events and to appear in a variety of contexts. In relation to this, the Spotmobile represented a significant PR value, since it had both a distinctive look and appeared in many places, functioning as an alternative meeting place. Other activities that had great publicity value were the monthly promotion of an up-and-coming band – *Spot of the Month*



– and the book *Imprint*. The fact that Mindspot carried out interviews, wrote articles and placed photos of bands on Myspace and the project's blog and that young people told their stories, led to their friends and acquaintances becoming familiar with Mindspot. Therefore, the project consciously attempted to appeal to the interests of the target group by being visible in users' virtual as well as physical environments but also by creating projects, which young people would distribute to their own networks. They were active when they were spreading their own interests, their stories and their productions.

We also worked with more regular marketing in the project. A logo was created based on the name Mindspot

and we worked continuously with the design and presentation of flyers, posters, event calendars etc. However, we also entered into cooperation with a young advertising agency about the composition of a slogan and preparation of a publicity campaign. The cooperation and conversation with the advertising agency essentially dealt with what the core of Mindspot was and, thus, what we were to promote. This way, a group of young people saw the project in a new light and offered their suggestions to methods for sending clear signals from Mindspot. Together we discussed what signals to send. The essence was that Mindspot differed from the traditional perception of the library in that young people through Mindspot were able to influence the library, submit and realise ideas. Our slogan and the centre of the publicity campaign became *Make it your Library*.

Branding Mindspot rather than the library as such caused several people to question whether the library was being marketed and, consequently, whether we gained experiences with marketing the library to young people at all. In a way, this objection is valid: we made a conscious choice not to market the library as a whole, as we found that to be irrelevant for the target group. The objective of the project was not to promote the entire library service but to focus on a single relevant offer to avoid a jumble of information. By taking this approach we ran a risk that the publicitywork would be in vain in case Mindspot was not carried on after the end of the project period. But we saw Mindspot as the library and in marketing Mindspot we thus marketed part of the library to young people. In our view, it was more important to work with differentiated marketing and to tell a single, clearcut story rather than trying to tell everything at once. In retrospect, we continue to believe that this was the right and the only strategy if a

given target group is to be reached. It is obvious to us that it was the unambiguous messages that were successful in Mindspot's publicity.

Experiences

- We used our networks and let many of the young people promote us and our events
- We did not try to market the entire library but focused on marketing the service, which was relevant to the target group
- We sent out event calendars, newsletters, text messages and Facebook-invitations and we advertised via networks and the city's digital event calendars. We tried to be visible in as many places as possible

Recommendations

- Cooperate with the chosen target group on marketing
- Make sure you are visible in young people's environments. Use your resources efficiently and be present where it is relevant
- When it comes to young people, human relations is the best advertising pillar
- Use the library for advertising, but remember that there are more young people outside the library than inside
- Do not waste all resources on producing posters – in many places, you are not allowed to put them up anyway. Flyers, on the other hand, can often be distributed widely

³⁰ Suggestions for the Mindspot slogan produced by a young advertising agency, MINUS21, in the summer of 2008. Slogans translated.

³¹ On this background, the Danish Agency for Libraries and Media have launched a marketing project: www.bibliotekogmedier.dk/biblioteksomraadet/indsatsomraader/markedsfoering/ (in Danish only).

We cannot go it Alone

*We are making a project handbook – and we would very much appreciate your help :-)*³²

From the beginning of the project, we aimed at creating a user-driven, network-based youth library. Our focus on a network-based product emerged from our expectation that we would not be able to produce a good and relevant library service for young people without the help of others. Our knowledge about young people, the youth culture and young people's media simply was not sufficient enough. Moreover, we supposed that it would be easier to come into contact with young people through networks. Thus, we started a conversation with surrounding institutions and youth stakeholders to open our organisation and expand our field of activity because we feared that we would fail if we assumed that the library could go it alone. If the library was to think outside the traditional framework, we had to open up to the outside world.

We worked based on networks on a vast majority of the offers we made. We involved school teachers in devising our teaching offers, and youth clubs were involved in devising as well as carrying out the various events. Concerts were planned in cooperation with music experts, film events in cooperation with film experts and computer gaming events were created together with gamers³³.

The network was also used continuously to give the group behind Mindspot input when we felt stuck. Network meetings were held for the entire Mindspot group; for only Mindspotters or Mindkeepers; or for Mindspotters, Mindkeepers and external partners. The point of these meetings was in part to gain practical assistance or overcome a difficult period, and in part to shake up Mindspotters as well as Mindkeepers in order to avoid the group becoming too institutionalised.

In our view, institutionalisation is probably the greatest barrier in a developmental and networking cooperation. The dynamics will disappear if a fixed way of thought or a 'we usually do it like this' gains the upper hand. The network provides an opportunity to avoid this institutionalisation, as the individual institutions constantly have to communicate with each other as to whom and what they are and the 'tacit knowledge' is thus communicated. However, this will only succeed if the network is made up of dissimilar organisations and people.

In the beginning of the project, we were the outreaching partner. We were the ones to ask external partners for help. But during the project, the cooperation developed into proper network cooperation, where we too were contacted to lend a hand in connection with concept development, lending of equipment, participation with the Spotmobile or to act as entry point to the library or other parts of the municipality.

Experiences

- The project became better and more successful because it was generated in cooperation with other people, who were knowledgeable in other areas than us
- It was sometimes necessary to turn down a cooperation because the cooperation partners were too far from each other
- Cooperation was sometimes difficult because the partners had differing ideas about how and when to do things. It was important for us to balance between giving free rein when possible and tightening the grip when necessary
- It takes a long time to establish a network and one of the strengths in this project was that the project, and thus the network, had time to grow

Recommendations

- A relevant youth service cannot be generated without cooperation and sparring partners. The library cannot, and should not, invent everything themselves
- Networks are not established via e-mail – grab the telephone and make a call
- Cooperation relations can fail so make sure that your network consists of both professionals and amateurs. They contribute different things
- If a cooperation relation seems destined to fail, discontinue this particular relation in the initial phase rather than spending the entire project being annoyed that it does not work. Nip problems in the bud
- All parties in a cooperation relation must have something to contribute. The library should not be on the receiving end only. Give something back to cooperation partners
- Those who contribute ideas to others and receive ideas from others do well
- Establish networks within a range of different cultural institutions, which have other qualifications than libraries
- Make sure you mix people and professional groups that normally do not work together and that have different working methods, skills and perspectives. People who are too similar do not challenge each other
- Ensure a clear matching of expectations. When this is done, it is okay to make demands throughout the project
- Round off the cooperation – how does each partner evaluate the cooperation?

³² The subject of an e-mail sent to Mindspot's network in connection with the making of *The Project Guide*. Quote translated.

³³ A list of Mindspot's cooperation partners can be found at: www.aakb.dk/sw99808.asp





A Reflective Process with Disruptions and Self-Evaluation

For me, the 'stop day'³⁴ clearly showed that when someone external asks 'disrupting' questions, it forces us to define who we are and articulate what we do, which is healthy and rewarding for the project³⁵

Evaluation of Project YOUng

By Michael René Kristiansson

Project YOUng was evaluated according to the principle of continuous self-evaluation – a conversation-based method. The point of using continuous self-evaluation was to frequently adjust the project in relation to the goal of the project, yet taking into consideration that precisely the goal of the project might change character along the way if it seemed appropriate. Which it did. Naturally, there were limits as to how much the goal could deviate from the original foundation and basis for the application to the Danish Agency for Libraries and Media. It was a huge task for the project group to be able to handle both the original goal and the dynamics in relation to objectives. The challenge for the project group was to be able to explain in a convincing manner and substantiate a possible deviation if, during the project, the dynamic objectives came to deviate markedly from the originally established goals.

The argument for choosing continuous evaluation rather than a retrospective evaluation was that the result of retrospective evaluation surfaces too late to be able to adjust the process in time. The argument for choosing self-evaluation rather than external evaluation was that, in principle, self-evaluation is faster and more efficiently achieves the acceptance of the evaluation results from participants. However, problems will arise if the project group does not possess adequate self-criticism and if the

project participants do not have the necessary technique (or do not embrace the technique) to observe the project from 'the outside'. The great advantage of the method in hand – continuous self-evaluation – is that it encourages user involvement, which was one of the original objectives in YOUng. Because the method is based on conversation, it was possible to involve the Mindspotters in the evaluation debate although in an indirect way. The negative aspect of the applied evaluation method is that retrospective, independent, external evaluation is presumably considered by many to be more transparent and reliable than continuous self-evaluation.

Continuous adjustment and coordination

Prior to Michael René Kristiansson's involvement in the evaluation process, the project group had formulated a hierarchy of goals for each of the three elements (space, dissemination and content), which the project wanted evaluated.

- Space: To define how a new and innovative youth environment/youth library with room for meetings and informal learning should look with regard to decor and lay-out, services, activities, materials etc.
- Dissemination: To strengthen young people's curiosity towards, and desire to, work with IT and to participate in democratic processes by providing young people with an opportunity to influence the public domain both as personal physical and virtual space and as collective physical and virtual space
- Content: To create a platform, which will provide cohesion during a period of life with many institutional changes in cooperation between youth institutions and the library. The platform must be a place where young people are given assistance and opportunity to express themselves.

The hierarchy of goals consisted of a description of the correlation between goal, objectives, criteria for success and method of evaluation in relation to the goal etc. In January of 2007 at the initial meeting between the project group and the newly appointed evaluator, it was agreed that the method of evaluation should be based on the principle of continuous self-evaluation and reflection. It was also agreed that in future this principle was to be equal to (or be able to affect) the hierarchy of goals. The starting point of the evaluation process became to 'test' the hierarchy of goals for mutual consistency, coherence etc. The starting point of the evaluation furthermore became to 'test' the mental models of the project group: Did the project participants share a common perception of the project or did varying perceptions exist? And if the participants' way of thinking differed, what was the cause of this?

The first 'stop day' took place in April of 2007. First, the evaluator interviewed the project manager after which a workshop was held for the entire project group. Each participant was to present elements of the project. The evaluator questioned each participant in part to uncover inconsistency in the project and its hierarchy of goals, and in part to provoke the participant's 'tacit knowledge' about the project. This 'stop day' was an eye opener for the project group and the project changed shape and direction as a result: Project YOUng changed from an idea of establishing a physical library to or for young people to an idea of developing new library services for young people in Aarhus in a conversation with the young, cf. the chapter Project YOUng was the Beginning. The project took the form of a communication project aimed at broadening the horizon and increasing perspectives for the involved partners.

Reflection notes

An important tool in the evaluation and adjustment process was the preparation of reflection notes. Each participant in the project group had, prior to each 'stop day', to produce one or more reflection notes on the activities, which had taken place since the last 'stop day'. The goal of the reflection notes was to make project participants maintain and formulate their assessments – positive and negative – of the activities, which had taken place. Participants often had different observations based on their respective standpoints and temperament and the point of working with reflection was to make the participants share their knowledge and observations with each other. This, too, became an eye opener for the participants, as it became clear to everyone that assessments of the same activities varied widely. Another objective of meeting to discuss the reflection notes was to, on a frequent basis, reach consensus on the project and its development. Without such a meeting to establish consensus and a preceding process of reflection, it was likely that the participants, as the project progressed, would develop different perceptions of the project. Without a united approach, the project would lose impetus and direction. Mindspotters were not asked to produce reflection notes, as this task was deemed too comprehensive for them.

'Stop days'

During the process of evaluation, a total of three 'stop days' was held, the first of which is mentioned above. Apart from Mindkeepers, project owner and project consultant, the Mindspotters participated in the 'stop days' in November of 2007 and May of 2008.

The aim of the meeting on 29 November 2007 was to prepare common stories about the project to ensure that

Mindkeepers and Mindspotters would become better at communicating with each other by means of a common linguistic/narrative frame of reference. The aim of the following 'stop day' was to 'disrupt' the general view of the project, which had been established among the participants during the intervening time due to the daily humdrum. This 'disruption' was based on the question of whether the project was heading in the right direction or whether an adjustment was needed. The 'trick' was to make Mindkeepers and Mindspotters enter into a conversation about the Mindspot-project in a new and different way from the talks that are possible during ordinary working days.

The final evaluation

The final evaluation stretched over two days in January of 2009. Extensive interviews were carried out with both Mindkeepers and Mindspotters. Rounding off the final day was a workshop during which the latest and most comprehensive projects, activities and products were discussed and evaluated. The workshop and interviews revealed a general consensus on the success of project YOUng/Mindspot both in terms of process and achieved results. This perception has also been confirmed by the fact that the project will be continued as part of the library's general service.

The concept behind the evaluation principle of 'continuous self-evaluation' is that the project is adjusted along the way and that criticism is taken seriously, maintained in memory and formulated explicitly, e.g. in the shape of experiences and recommendations. A coming article will assess the evaluation project (the project within the project) and thus the part about 'continuous self-evaluation'. The article is expected to be published in 2009 in a Danish or international library-related research publication.

Cooperation with the evaluator

By Louise Overgaard

The method of continuous evaluation is new to Aarhus Main Library and the choice was carefully considered before a decision was made. It was a question of whether the evaluation method would provide adequate and acceptable evaluation materials when the final product of the project would not be an evaluation report written by an external evaluator. Another question was whether we would be able to set aside time for reflections. There was a risk that the work on reflections to be carried out by the group itself would be forgotten when the practical and busy everyday work took over.

In retrospect, these deliberations were relevant. At the end of the project period, however, it is the experience of the project group that we have gained a lot from the chosen evaluation- and adjustment process, although it was important to find a balance of how many reflection notes to make and when. It was essential that Mindkeepers had the time and mental energy to consider the questions asked reflectively; otherwise the result would be standard replies without underlying consideration. During the initial period, it was also important to discuss the approach to reflections, as making the replies reflective was a learning process in itself. During the project, Mindkeepers learned to raise their project reflections to a meta level. During certain periods, the evaluator and project manager discussed what questions to ask; during other periods, the project manager asked the questions, which she needed answered.

This meant that the reflection notes of YOUng were not only used to evaluate and adjust the content of the project, but were also used as a managerial tool. By using reflection notes, we established an open space for prob-

lems, frustrations and continuous feedback between the project manager and project participants.

Continuous 'stop days' and intervening meetings about reflection notes were regular elements of the project's working method. Although comments to the tune of 'how should I answer this?', 'I will just procrastinate for a while before moving on to the reflection note', or 'we answered this a year ago' were often heard, the process was beneficial and the reflections came to be a breathing space during busy days. At the end of the project, all Mindkeepers emphasise the usefulness of reflection in the project.

In order to accomplish the process, a good cooperation between the evaluator and the project was essential. It was especially important to have a good communication between evaluator and project manager because in the daily work with the project it was the project manager's responsibility to fit reflections and questions into the project's programme. The execution of such a process of continuous evaluation and adjustment is thus dependent on adequate time and energy in the project group and on the management's understanding of the idea behind investing time and energy in the work. A continuous self-evaluation process demands considerable more work in the institution than an externally managed evaluation process, but on the other hand it offers an opportunity to adjust and qualify the project continuously.

Experiences

- The process of continuous evaluation has been good because it gave us time to correct and adjust throughout the project period and because we had set aside adequate time for reflection
- The process became useful for the project both as an evaluation- and adjustment tool and as a managerial tool

- Our evaluation process ensured that our hierarchy of goals was adjusted continuously to reflect the direction in which we wanted the project to move
- The group consisting of Mindkeepers and project manager entered into a deep discussion about the goals of the project and reached consensus about the direction of the project. This consensus prepared Mindkeepers and project manager for meeting the Mindspotters and ensured that confusion was avoided when Mindspotters or other groups of young people suggested amendments. Thus, the consensus created an ability to adapt

Recommendations

- Ask open questions in the reflection notes, ask the same question perhaps in more ways than one and ask important questions regularly
- Consider carefully when to ask questions and which questions to ask
- If you want to work with reflection as a method, it requires time and energy and the project must have a duration, which makes it possible for adjustments to be made based on the reflections
- It is important to create a space that allows both positive and negative reflections. Thus, it is important to e.g. have clear guidelines for how papers are stored or published and how reflections are presented

³⁴ A 'stop day' is a day in which a break is taken from the daily routines in e.g. a project and the people involved reflect on what has taken place so far and what is to happen onwards in the process. It is an opportunity, in a sense, to answer the questions: 'where are we in the process now, where are we going and how do we get there?'

³⁵ From a reflection note written by one of the Mindkeepers after the first 'stop day' in April of 2007. Note translated.



List of publications

During the project, reports, books and films have been published. Where nothing else is stated, the reports, books and films are in Danish only:

Aftryk – Unge i Århus ('Imprint – Young People in Aarhus')

The book was produced by two Mindspotters and eight young volunteers. See the chapter The Library as Producer. The book can be downloaded from www.mindspot.dk

Brug Hovedet ('Use Your Head')

Folder on information searching. The folder was produced by the project's Mindkeepers. See the chapter Focusing on Information. The folder can be downloaded from www.aakb.dk/mindspot

Fremtidens bibliotek – Et idékatalog skabt for Århus Kommunebibliotek af unge århusianere ('Library of the Future – An Idea Catalogue Created for Aarhus Public Libraries by Young People from Aarhus')

The idea catalogue is the result of a workshop held at Aarhus Main Library in the spring of 2007. The idea catalogue can be downloaded from www.aakb.dk/mindspot

How to engage youth

– A best practice report from MEeting YOUTH (in English)

The report was made by project partners of the project MEeting YOUTH. Read more about the project on www.aakb.dk/meetingyouth
The report can also be downloaded there.

Hvad er Mindspot? ('What is Mindspot?')

A presentation video produced by one of the Mindspotters. The video can be viewed at www.mindspot.dk/hvad-er-mindspot

Hvis du fik fem millioner, hvad ville du så gøre for unge i Århus? ('What Would You do for Young People in Aarhus if You were Given Five Million?')

An overview of the many ideas brought forward by young people from Aarhus in the summer of 2008. The list can be downloaded from www.aakb.dk/mindspot

Hvordan inddrager vi de unge? ('How do we Involve Young People?')

Article in Danmarks Biblioteker, volume 5, 2008, about user involvement of young people in connection with the project MEeting YOUTH, among others.

Mindspot – Make it your Library (in English)

Reflection Report from Aarhus Main Library's youth project, which produced the service Mindspot. The report can be downloaded from www.aakb.dk/mindspot

Mindspot – the Movie – the Library as a Universe! (in English)

A film about the Mindspot way-of-thinking and a presentation of the Mindspot universe. The video can be viewed on www.youtube.com and www.aakb.dk/mindspot

Spot of the Month

To promote up-and-coming bands, Mindspot initiated Spot of the Month. This included writing a number of articles, producing films and taking photographs of young bands. See the chapter The Library as Producer. View the materials at: www.mindspot.dk/manedens-spot/ and www.myspace.com/mindspotdk

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Projektguiden – en guide til unge projektmagere i Århus ('The Project Guide – for Young Project Visionaries in Aarhus')

The book was produced by a number of project visionaries from Aarhus and edited by two Mindspotters. See the chapter 'Assistance for Young Innovators'. The book can be downloaded from www.projektguidenaarhus.dk

REACH OUT! – Inspiration til brugerinddragelse og innovation i kulturens verden ('REACH OUT! – Inspiration for User Involvement and Innovation in Culture')

Mindspot's user involvement is among the issues described in the Ministry of Culture's report. The report can be downloaded from www.kum.dk/sw80075.asp

Vejen til bedre kulturtilbud for unge ('The Road to Better Cultural Offers for Young People')

Reporting from the project day 'From Space Invader to Space Creator – Young People as a Force of Innovation', Danmarks Biblioteker, volume 5, 2008.

Projektlinks:

Mindspot: www.mindspot.dk

Mindspot's photographs:

www.flickr.com/photos/mindspot/

Mindspot's films: www.youtube.com/mindspotdk

Mindspot's project website: www.aakb.dk/mindspot

Spot of the Month: www.myspace.dk/mindspotdk

The Project Guide: www.projektguidenaarhus.dk

YOUng: www.aakb.dk/young

Inspirational Links:

Brug Brugerne ('Use the Users'): www.brugbrugerne.dk

Brugernes Bibliotek ('The Users' Library):

remixbiblioteket.dk/brugernesbibliotek/

Transformation Lab: www.aakb.dk/forvandlingsrum

The Children's Interactive Library:

www.aakb.dk/detinteraktivebornebibliotek

Hybrid Learning Environments: www.aakb.dk/hybride

MEeting YOUth: www.aakb.dk/meetingyouth

Multimediehuset (the future main library of Aarhus):

www.multimediehuset.dk

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Medien@age, Dresden, Germany
Punkt Medis, Stockholm, Sweden
Sutton Library, London, England
The Warsaw Public Library of the Ursynów District, Warszawa, Poland



Mindspot Make it your Library. Reflection Report from the Development Project YOUng. Aarhus Main Library, Citizens' Services and Libraries

MINDSPOT