

Developing public reading in the Strasbourg Urban Community



Developing reading in the Strasbourg urban Community was urged by the UNESCO Public Library manifesto.

I'd like to quote this sentence :

« Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information. »

For each librarian, these are written in stone word, and they're more than ever a constant reminder.

The City and Urban Community of Strasbourg's concillors wished to grant to all the citizens a larger and better acces to reading facilities in the whole urban area.

The reading development policy in Strasbourg Urban Community

The beginnings of a common wish

- A common cultural project initiated in 2001
 - 27 partners (the Urban Community towns members)
- ... 1st decision : to assess in the area



In 2001, the Strasbourg Urban Community decided that cultural matters should be, on some specific areas, a common concern.

In order to provide a better access to reading and information resources, councillors focused on global reading, at the Urban Community scale (475 000 over 27 towns).

A reading audit

In 2002, a workgroup composed by the main local actors in public reading gathered. They audited, basing their work on surveys made by the librarians of the Urban Community.

The information gathered led to several propositions. These propositions were the bases of Community's orientations regarding a general reading policy.

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The reading development policy in Strasbourg Urban Community

- **A zoom on : as reading stands in 2003**
- A unique territory : the urban area and its 27 communes members
- The Strasbourg city's 10 libraries network
- 14 libraries in the suburbs



The audit pointed out the co-existence of the Strasbourg city structured network, employing professional librarians in 10 libraries serving 270 000 inhabitants, and 14 libraries of smaller size in the suburbs, of uneven means and services.

Some of these towns are the patrons of the « Bibliothèque Départementale de Prêt » the Department Lending Library, a library (with its local branches) dedicated to the needs of libraries set in town of less than 10 000 inhabitants in each french department.

Although some of these libraries are users of the Department Lending Library, they had very few contacts one with each others and even less with the Strasbourg City Libraries Network.

- **Identifying the needs**
- M²... Study space...documents and services offer
- Low attendance

Identifying the needs

There were several needs considering usual standards.

- in m² of libraries surface but also in
- In number of documents per habitants (1,3 opposite to 2,5 regarding the standards)
- In work space number (1 for 355, opposite to UNESCO recommendation which is one workspace for 50 inhabitants).
- others needs: very few PC with Internet access, and only 2 out of 10 libraries in Strasbourg that offered Videos & DVD's loan.

Low attendance was a logical consequence of the under equipped libraries : the attendance of 12% was under the national 17.6% average of inhabitants holder of a library card.

- **The foundations**
- July 2003 : Common interest and partial jurisdiction transfer

The workgroup's propositions for the needs pointed out met the policy of the Urban Community Councillors.

Those councillors had decided, in July 2003, to transfer part of the public reading jurisdiction (which in France belongs to the Mayor) to the Urban Community. This jurisdiction transfer concerned the three towns where the South, West and North libraries are.

There was a double-objective : improving first the reading and informations access and then optimizing public funds spending.

A 2 dimensions choice

Build

- A « role model » library :
The André Malraux library
- completed with 3 libraries (Branches in towns in South, North and West of Strasbourg Urban Community)
- Create professional links and cohesion (**the network**)



The jurisdiction transfer implied two aspects.

The first aspect concerned the building and running of 4 main Urban Community libraries : André Malraux Library, South Library, West Library and North Library (to be opened in 2014).

Starting from of 9000 m² of libraries surface existing, it would eventually rise to an added 27 000 m² surface

The second aspect lied in the challenge of building libraries and create professional links and cohesion at the in a very short time.

➤ **A new start for the libraries network**

- Enliven this new network : the Pass'relle* card

*Footbridge



The Pass'relle card, or the birth of the new network

Launched the 7th of december 2007, this card is a pass giving access to twenty seven libraries affiliated members of the Pass'relle network.

The subscriber is able to access to more than a million documents and go to several libraries, which should help to build complementarity between small towns libraries to the three larger created in the Strasbourg biggest and nearest suburbs.

This unique card, giving access to the smaller and the bigger libraries, is the symbol of new network.

Almost eighty thousand Pass'relle card have been issued in twenty six months, on a total of four hundred seventy five thousands of the Strasbourg Urban Community inhabitants.



André Malraux Library

- Some figures : 12000 m², 1000 work spaces, for a cost of 58 000 000 €
- 500 000 documents (from manuscripts to digital documents)
- 7 sections, 3 axes of development
- Central Library, at the head of the libraries network



In september 2008, André Malraux library eventually opened .

The mass of documents, specifics, activities that André Malraux library offers reach people beyond the Urban Community limits.

Cost :

Total amount : 57 800 000,00 €

Building : 50 000 000,00 €

Furniture, hardware & software : 4 800 000,00 €

Collection : 3 000 000,00 €

Investors :

Building & equipment

French State : 12 100 000,00 €

Bas-Rhin department : 4 700 000,00 €

Alsace Region : 3 090 000,00 €

Strasbourg Urban Community : 34 910 000,00 €

Collections

500 000 documents including 220 000 on open access; the collection of 280 000 heritage documents on limited access, 780 periodicals on open access too

The open access collection is displayed in 7 theme sections : News and Information section, youth section, Music & Cinema section, Literature & Languages section, World & Society section, Sciences and Leisures section, Arts, Comics and Illustration Center section.

3 specific axes of development have been decided, related to local history.

- The Illustration centre : there has been a long running tradition of illustrators in Alsace, from Gustave Doré to Tomi Ungerer, and many young talents are emerging each year from Strasbourg Fine Arts School.

- The second axes of development focuses on european literature, Strasbourg being European Union capital welcomes many european institutions, including the Parliament and the European Court of Human Rights...

- The third axes of development is the heritage collection of 280 000 documents including 50 000 documents from local publishers.



View on the first site which was at the origin of Strasbourg's river port.

Strasbourg's river port is today the second most important in France

Being the main building in this water zone, André Malraux Library takes over this glorious inherited industrial estate.

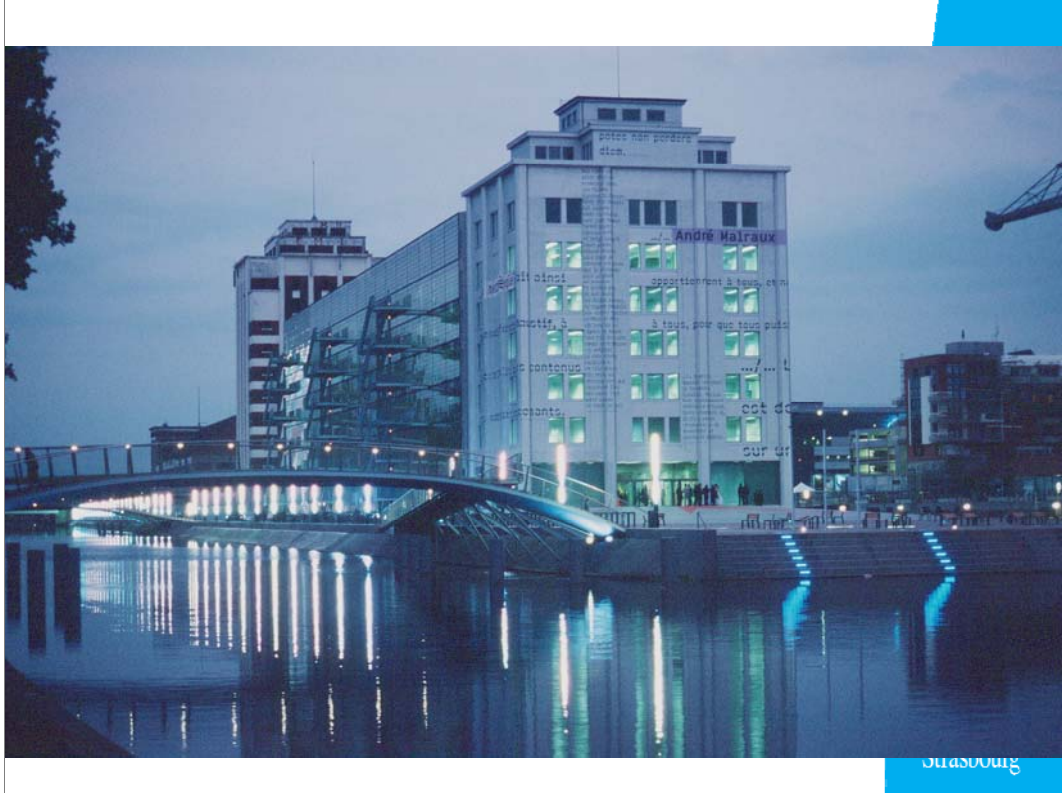


The library can be seen through the windows that covers its two side.

With its 3200 entrances a day in average, André Malraux library has proved a tremendous succes. It's the most successfull cultural facility of the city.

Users are praising its beauty.

Architects Jean-Marc IBOS and Myrto VITART rehabilitated this industrial building.









How is André Malraux library layed out ?

3 libraries in the 3 main suburbs towns that are completing
A. Malraux:

- Middle size facilities offering access to a large range of multimedia collections
- A common cultural activities policy for towns libraries in the Strasbourg Urban Community



Speaking of architectural network, three complementary types have been defined. André Malraux, with its three axes of development (written heritage collection, European literature and Illustration Center), is the first type.

Set in the 3 main Urban Community towns, with plenty of schools and cultural facilities, the West, South (and future North) libraries complete Andre Malraux library.

They have quite an influence as cultural equipments, in the territories they are set in, regarding geographical and demographical criterias.

As of today, only two main towns are concerned by these new equipments. South Library, in Illkirch-Graffenstaden (27 000 inhabitants) library, and West library, in Lingolsheim (17 000 inhabitants).

These two libraries have a multimedia collection, and offer several services, such as Internet access, TV or cd stations, halls dedicated to the libraries' activities etc.

The access to public reading and information is therefore shared with these two libraries (and soon three) in Strasbourg suburb.

They're the second type of the Urban Community libraries network.

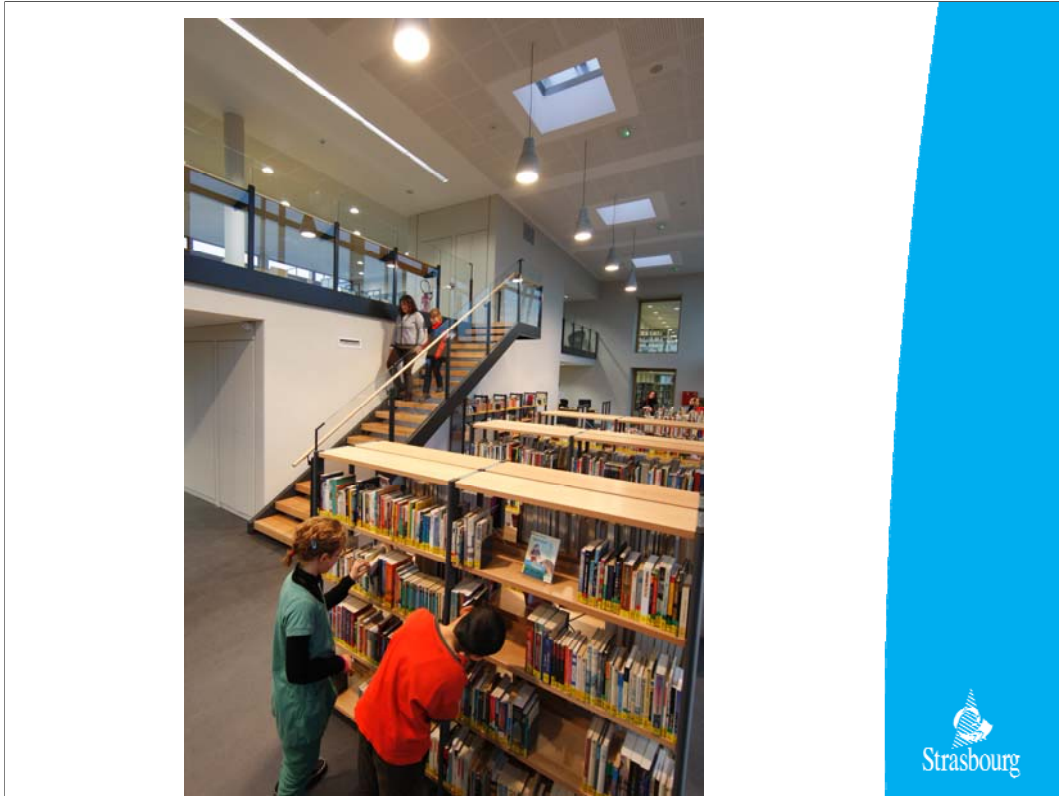
They are taking part in the activities of the libraries around them, in smaller size towns of the Urban Community, building connections with this third type of equipment. Those smaller libraries are quite independant regarding budget and activities.

As for Strasbourg city 10 libraries network, they are branches, each one being in a specific neighbourhood. They are of different sizes and offer different size of collection, each one targeting its own area, but in reality, their influence reaches far











Strasbourg



Strasbourg

- **The network dynamics**
- **Cultural activities, the driving force behing the development of the network**
- **A shared communication**
www.mediatheques-cus.fr
- **The Management Information System**



A common cultural activity policy is the tool to create the dynamic of this network. Cooperation is the key to achieve this goal.

Having low or no budget to realise such projects on their own, the smaller libraries wish to host exhibitions, lectures organised by André Malraux and the South and West libraries, and the Strasbourg city network.

Since 2009, several exhibtions of original drawings purchased by Andre Malraux library's Illustration center have been realized,

These exhibtions will be available in others libraries of the network. They will have also access to the youth and Heritage section activities.

Work within a network frame is essential.

The first workgroup's meetings pointed out the feeling of isolation of the volunteering librarians and employees of the the third type of library and thus, the need to learning to work together, for example on more ambitious and larger cultural activities

A shared communication

A common website (www.mediatheques-cus.fr) has been created. A map presents informations on the libraries member of the network, with links to their own online catalogue.

Information desks dedicated to the Pass'relle network have opened in André Maraux and West and South library.

- **A long term work in progress**
- **The network and the challenge today**

A long- term work in progress

The last actions toward the development of public reading show changes adapted to Strasbourg's specificities.

One lesson learned is to involve every player on a long term project in order to succeed, not to mention the risk of wanting to make too much too fast.

It's essential that each library has its place in the network, getting from and giving to one another.

Working on a network cannot be decided from the top, it's a day to day work involving everyone.

It's the only way.

Each step made has to bring an added value for every library member of the network. It will take time.

The network and the challenge today

Changing from an open access documents public library to a place of knowledge, and social meeting is now a reality and will have huge influence on the future evolutions, It's the purpose of André Malraux library

The second type libraries in the suburbs are meant to create their own reading and information dynamic in their area too, implementing new ideas, projects, new uses.

It goes way beyond giving only access to reading and information resources, the mission is more about welcoming people in cultural facilities.

The challenge now is defining a precise way of welcoming the public so we can promote it to the third type of the network libraries.