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Good morning, ladies and gentlemen:

First of all, I wish to extend my own warm welcome to you at the 2003 IFLA Conference here in Berlin. I'm glad that we are able to welcome so many guests here in Germany and hope that you will all find the conference to be stimulating and fruitful.

It is both an honor and a pleasure for me to say a few words to you as part of this session, and my gratitude for this opportunity goes to Ms. Lek Choh from the National Library Board of Singapore, who coordinated our meeting today.

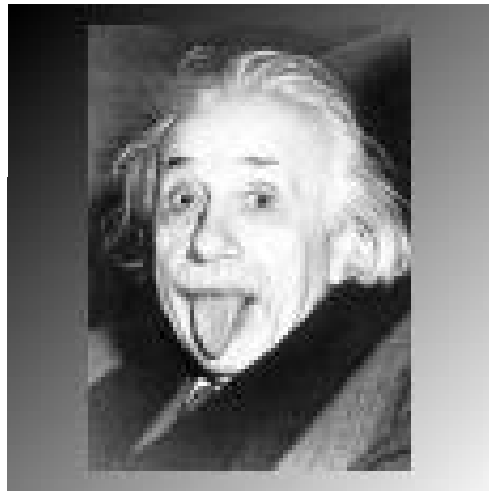
Our topic this morning is "Innovation in Public Libraries." And I feel that this topic contains a rather simple question, but a question that – as so often in life, one should say – is not so easily answered.

The question is: How do new things come into the world? How does innovation actually come about in the sector of public libraries? Or is perhaps any activity at all in the public sector per se, if not necessarily hostile to innovation, then at least not friendly to innovation due to the extensive and often time-consuming opinion-forming processes and compulsory coordination?

How do new things come into the world? How is innovation engendered?

Maybe it's the creativity of an individual who manages to look naively, so to speak, and question elements of information, then compile them in an entirely new fashion into an innovative idea.

$$E=mc^2$$



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Maybe it's also a leadership style that promotes responsibility and delegation, that welcomes unusual solutions and simultaneously creates a risk-friendly culture of mistakes.



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Maybe it's even occasionally a quite unpleasant pressure for change and an iota of fear – for example, from lively competition – that often moves and inspires people to search for new and unconventional solutions.

I'm sure you're all familiar with the phenomenon that it's sometimes in stressful situations and under time pressure that the best ideas are born. There's a saying for that: necessity is the mother of invention.

On the other hand, we also know that inspiration, learning and especially solidifying and developing a thought often enough require the support of a certain independence from the labors of breadwinning.



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It seems to me that in any case, however, innovation also comes about in an environment of stimulating conversation, in the possibility of creative dialog with others. Constant, systematic and sophisticated exchange, the challenge of your own thoughts and ideas by colleagues, combined with a common goal: those, too, are ingredients of innovation that can move mountains.



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And thus the question is obvious: do similar factors actually apply to libraries as well? Libraries are often large organizations that have long grown and operated independently of markets and their demands for innovation.

And unlike in the world of science and technology, there are also seldom inspiring places of innovation such as one finds at some universities and large research facilities, where people can continually convene to inspire one another with their forward-looking work.

So how does innovation emerge in libraries? Why is it that in some countries the libraries overflow with innovative energy while in other countries the tone is set by meeting long-term obligations in the same, unchanging routine?

We are all familiar with personalities in the library world that stand or have stood for innovation. People with clear visions, who can think outside the box, with a winning energy and persuasiveness, people who have inspired us all and set wonderful examples with their institutions. But what is the picture of innovative energy at the national level? Are there actually factors that generate especially innovative library systems? We all know that there are entirely noteworthy differences here between countries!

Extraordinary personalities, differences in national circumstances and the lack of a place for innovation in libraries all inspired the Bertelsmann Foundation to create in 1996 a sort of “meeting platform” for especially innovative and successful library practitioners: the “International Network of Public Libraries,” consisting currently of 15 members from 11 countries. In this network, model concepts are developed for modern library management and later tested in practice.

The goal is to find the best practice – be it within or outside of the library sector. And the goal is to find internationally applicable solutions, to challenge them in critical dialog and to then implement and test them in other national and cultural contexts.



The slide features the Bertelsmann Foundation logo in the top left corner. The main title is "International Network of Public Libraries". Below the title is a photograph of a group of people sitting around a table, looking at a world map. To the right of the photograph is a list of six bullet points. At the bottom left of the slide is the website address "www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de" and a small number "9" in the bottom right corner.

- ◆ 15 members from 11 countries
- ◆ exchange of experience
- ◆ search for best practice (within the library sector and beyond)
- ◆ development of innovative model concepts for modern library management
- ◆ transfer into practice
- ◆ despite cultural and political differences: similar topics and challenges for public libraries all over the world!

In the seven years that the network has existed, an intimate working atmosphere and a wealth of knowledge and contacts have developed that have impressed me greatly. The participants have said over and over again how profitable they have found the inspirational learning and working together, the combination of different experience from the participating countries and the possibility of thinking outside one’s own daily context.

And it turned out that despite all the political and cultural differences, the modern challenges to libraries and the subjects that occupy us are very similar the world over. And what’s more: other sectors have also served as profitable case studies and food for thought – for example on issues of sales approach and customer retention, on the challenges and opportunities of strategic partnerships and lobbying, and of course on all technological developments that characterize our world.

Besides content development, creating the International Network of Public Libraries also naturally involved a lot of research on individual applicants on the part of the project

managers. But we were occupied at least as much by the respective national characteristic of the library world.

And naturally, the question of innovation presented itself from a German perspective and for the library sector as follows:

- What are the success factors for developing a library infrastructure? What are the impeding factors?
- Putting aside historical and cultural roots, which concrete measures are essential to further develop the library system? In what context is it likely that libraries will be set up in a forward-looking manner? (and let me add an aside at this point: it's not always the lack of money that prevents forward-looking development!)
- And thirdly: which methods and suggested solutions could also be applicable to Germany?

How do new things come into the world of German libraries? How do we ensure that good solutions can be explored, tried and implemented? In a federally structured environment with a variety of autonomous funders, how can we install an engine of innovation that has energy, creates common momentum and simultaneously respects the decentralized individual elements of the German library system? These relatively simple questions were the foundation of our project "Library 2007." The project partner is the Federal Union of German Library Associations (the umbrella organization of all library unions and associations), so that all organized individual institutions and people could pull together.

The project components are traditional:

- A SWOT analysis of the actual state of German libraries on the basis of comprehensive data and with the help of qualitative interviews, taking into account the customers in particular and those stakeholders that are not active directly within the library system. We believe that the 360° outward look continually encourages differentiated findings and can truly inspire self-critical analysis as well.
- At the same time, we collaborated with the consulting firm Booz Allen & Hamilton to launch an international best practice study in five selected countries: Denmark and the UK, Singapore, Finland and the US were our candidates. We examined individual questions in each respective country.
- On the basis of these tests, we are currently identifying success factors and examining their applicability to Germany.

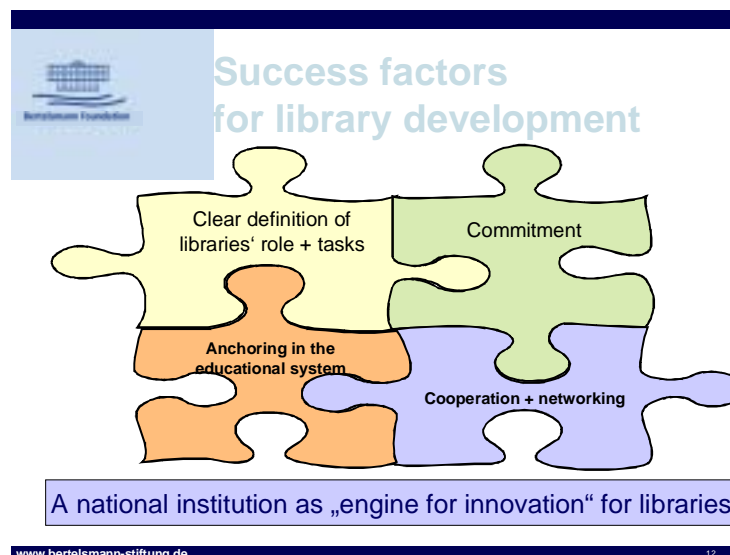
And although this last step is not yet complete, I can already report which recurring elements attract our particular attention:

The five selected countries all show very interesting approaches and successes in national library planning. They also are distinguished by a large state commitment to the library sector.

In addition, there are some central success factors that return again and again as a sort of leitmotiv:

- First, a clear definition among all the stakeholders of the mandate and role of the libraries. That sounds very simple, but in practice, it isn't. And it's not just about a simple image problem of the libraries among politicians but a stringent view of the functions of the libraries that protects against waste and strengthens the truly vital functions, that brings into line the performance expectations of the funders, financiers, customers and librarians: It's the common goal that makes innovation possible in the first place!

- Second, and closely related: the anchoring of the libraries in the educational system. Those countries that take education seriously and have a comprehensive educational concept must logically also keep up the performance of their libraries. All countries with exceptional libraries have a large and professed government commitment to educational issues and libraries.
- That brings us to our third point: commitment to the library system – be it a legal basis or another form of security – that does not guarantee independence from the labors of day-to-day breadwinning but does promise a reliable framework to secure even medium-term plans.
- A fourth success factor: cooperation and networking, paired with clear performance demands and stimulus mechanisms. Utilization of synergies: targeted, determined and maybe also paired with the recognition that occasionally a library’s very survival may depend on it.
- And finally, the existence of an institution whose mandate is not the bureaucratic administration of general fixed assets but the innovative design of development strategies, and for whom the empowerment to innovation is the highest purpose in life, so to speak. This requires those very creative contacts, conferences and networks that move mountains in the scientific world, for example.



We also learned, of course, that there is no patented formula for the infrastructure of the libraries in 2007 that we could simply copy. But the information gathered in the project does provide us with some pointers as to where we must focus in order to create sustainable conditions for German libraries.

And the information also provides much food for thought, for example on the target groups that we must address in the coming winter, when the project recommendations are available. Naturally we are concerned with including the expertise of librarians – but even more important here are the political perspective and the strategic partnerships with the framers of the overall educational landscape.

And so let me end with a picture that I discovered in Daniel Goleman’s book “The Creative Spirit,” which quotes Teresa Amabile, professor of business administration and head of entrepreneurial management at Harvard Business School: “Being creative is like making stew.”

Creativity, according to Amabile, has three ingredients: the vegetables or meat — the tangible — is the expertise or the skill, based on talent and solid education.

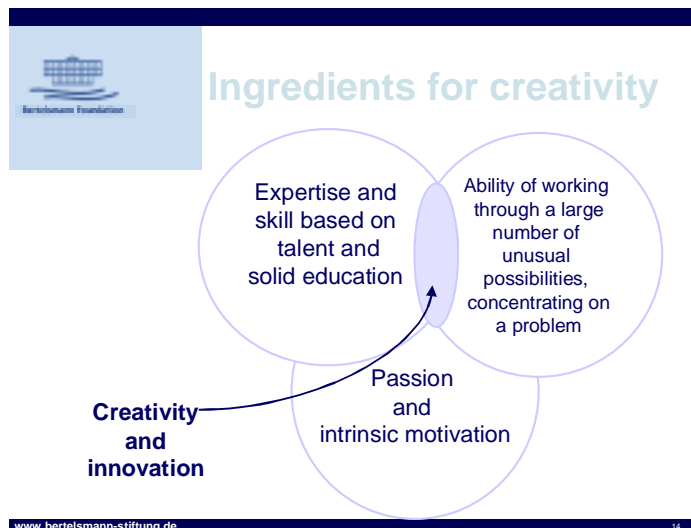
The second ingredient in the stew is what Amabile calls “creative intelligence.” This includes

*"Being creative
is like making
stew..."*



the ability of working through a large number of unusual possibilities, concentrating a long time on one problem and putting high demands on one’s own work. Those are the spices that make the ingredients actually taste good and come alive.

Finally, there is the third element, known to every great cook, that makes it complete: the passion, the intrinsic motivation, the desire to do something for its own sake and not to receive money or other rewards.



I am confident in our Library 2007 project and for the innovation of the international library scene, for I am convinced that we in the library sector of this world have large quantities of all three ingredients.

Thank you very much!