



Value Co-creation and Social Innovation for a new Generation of European Libraries

Press Release

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LibrarIN releases groundbreaking Policy Brief on transforming libraries through collaboration and innovation

The LibrarIN project proudly announces the release of a new policy brief, "*Reimagine Libraries: Sparking Collaboration for Innovation to Tackle Libraries' 21st Century Challenges*". Authored by leading experts Ernesto Solano and Luis Rubalcaba from the University of Alcalá, alongside Elena Silvestrini and Marieke Willems from The Lisbon Council, this brief provides insightful recommendations to revolutionise libraries into hubs of innovation and co-creation.

Libraries play a crucial role in fostering social inclusion and cohesion, as redefined by the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026. No longer mere repositories of books, libraries are envisioned as vibrant spaces that promote belonging, cultural awareness, well-being, and sustainable development. Like museums and galleries, libraries face 21st-century challenges that demand innovative and high-quality public services aligned with initiatives such as the New Bauhaus and the Green Deal.

Oftentimes, designing public library services following the internal logic of government or library managers - based on top-down policy assessments - do not meet the changing needs of citizens anymore' (Co-VAL, 2021). There is a growing need for social innovation and citizen participation to shape the future of libraries. Libraries must evolve to maintain their central role in cultural and socio-economic activities, encouraging entrepreneurship and sustainable development through innovative management models.



Key Insights from the LibrarIN policy brief

The LibrarIN literature review emphasises that collaboration is vital for 21st-century library innovation. Significant transformations in both academic and public libraries have been driven by collaborative efforts, leading to innovations such as participatory libraries, library living labs, makerspaces, and digital libraries. These developments provide a wide array of services ranging from social and business to educational, creative, and health services. At the same time, literature shows that library innovation is an underdeveloped topic, in need of additional empirical inquiry.

However, the brief also identifies barriers to collaboration and innovation, such as difficulty in measuring social impact, lack of real-world experience for early career librarians, risk aversion, and challenges in securing funding and external engagement. Addressing these challenges requires strategic policies and practices to enhance libraries' innovative performance.

Policy recommendations for enhancing library collaboration

Adding to the current leading policy and strategy debate, the Policy Brief offers actionable recommendations to promote collaboration and co-creation in libraries:

- **Develop co-creation policy areas:** Services should be designed based on user and community needs, involving strategic partners and user associations.
- **Focus on thematic areas:** Emphasise digital transformation and ICT, prepare physical spaces for collaboration, and promote innovation and living labs.
- **Address transversal areas:** Establish strategic frameworks for collaboration, facilitate stakeholder participation, and ensure organisational support.
- **Promote innovation:** Invest in research and development, enhance innovation ecosystems, and adopt best practices for promoting innovation.

Impact and future directions

The LibrarIN Policy Brief concludes that fostering collaboration and innovation is essential to tackle libraries 21st century challenges and transforming them into spaces of encounter, participation, and engagement. By developing effective strategies to encourage collaboration across all types of libraries and contexts, we can ensure equitable access and benefits for all communities.

[Download the full policy brief here](#)

About LibrarIN

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