Libraries and the homeless: experiences, challenges and opportunities

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C R O A T I A

IFLA satellite meeting in Tallinn
10 August 2012    Tallinn Central Library
3 models of interaction between the library and the homeless

1) The library as a living room— the homeless rarely come by

2) The library comes to the shelter— a step into the unknown for the library and the homeless

3) The library as a safe place— the homeless know that they are accepted and can ask for help
Library services within the 1st model

1) Information literacy workshops for the homeless
2) The homeless as volunteers in the library
3) Creative workshops with the homeless
4) Occasional sales of items made by the homeless and the sale of the Street Lamps magazine
5) Assisted article writing for the Street Lamps magazine
6) Promoting programs that include the homeless
7) Gatherings Bring Along A Friend
Workshops, sales, promoting...
The donor that offers financial and expert support as well as promotes the library’s active role in changes in society
A Book for a Roof: the Network of Libraries for Empowering the Homeless

- donating 4 computers and printers to the Shelter for the homeless Kosnica
- IT and information literacy workshops in Kosnica and at the central City Library
- workshops for support in finding jobs
- breaking down prejudice about the library and the homeless
A step into the unknown
Building trust
Being accepted
...expanding the social network...
Challenges:

- users’ unpredictable behaviour
- individual approach
- hard not to involve oneself in difficult life stories
- need for additional knowledge in the fields of psychiatry, social work, law...
- partners cannot always be available when help is needed
- success is rare, progress is slow
- risk of developing the “burnout” syndrome
- are you ready for activism? (Chip Ward)
Do you want to hear some life stories?
Opportunities:

- libraries – desirable partners
- create a network of different NGOs and institutions
- contribute to solving specific existential problems
- become aware of their potential and their own resources (human, space, contacts…)
- more visible in society
- attract the media
Solving legal problems
Designing websites, establishing business contacts.....
Assembling experts from different areas of life
The attention of the media
Cross the bridge to reach the homeless
Thank you for your attention!

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