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The Dance of Change. Staff and User

by HANNELORE JOULY

In the beginning I would like you to imagine a picture: there are people lying in deckchairs, young, cultivated, relaxed, surrounded by books.

Are this the staff of the library thinking up ways of making the Stuttgart City-Library more attractive?

Or are this the customers, who dream of their ideal library, which is open all day and all night, providing access to the global data networks and housing all the books you could possibly want to read, a library whose staff are highly competent and unshakably charming, a library with an inspiring and relaxed environment?

However: A stimulating environment, combined with fun, sparks creativity and innovation in customers and staff.

To begin with, here is some information about Stuttgart and the Stuttgart City Library:

Stuttgart is the capital of Baden-Wuerttemberg with a population of about 550,000 in the city and a further 2 million in the surrounding region.

The Stuttgart Public Library is comprising:

- 1 central library which also houses a music and a children's department
- 16 branches
- 2 mobile libraries
- 1 mediotheque

All in all it contains about 1 million volumes, it counts 4 million circulation, and receives nearly 2 million visitors per year.

The present Central City Library building is a beautiful former palace, built by an Italian architect 150 years ago as a dancing palace for two Princesses. It has a floor space of about 5,000 m² - far too little to house 500,000 volumes.

The Stuttgart City Library is an open library, an inviting place of life long learning for adults and children alike.

A constant flow of presentations and exhibitions are part of the library philosophy.

The Library as a cultural meeting point, the library as a stage, the library as an innovative promoter of high tech – these are the main themes of the Stuttgart City Library.

How have we succeeded in shaking off the dust, facing new challenges and making a learning organization out of a fixed organisation?

The Dance of Change comprises many elements, which I consider to be of prime importance in the design of a modern organisation.

- Flexibility and initiative are more important than systems or rules;
- find time for innovations and learning initiatives;
- think outside the box in a free flow of ideas;
- give your staff - and yourself the freedom to make mistakes;
- optimistic curiosity sweeps obstacles aside;
- infect others with the vision and values of the library;
- find friends and partners in the community and everywhere outside the library;
- provide yourself and the members of staff with the tools and techniques of management.

One of these tools is setting goals. Goals within the whole library system, within every section, for every member of staff.

As an example I show you the „Mission Statement" which was developed by members of staff:

- Successful;
- dynamic and reflective;

- cost-effective quality service delivery,
- anchored in the city and region of Stuttgart;
- internationally networked;
- implementing new ideas with imagination, creativity and sense of reality;
- receptive to new developments in the arts and technologies;
- providing a sense of community and spiritual rootedness, promoting identity in a global environment;
- assisting the public with competent, professional, committed, caring and reliable services;
- community-bases services (through neighbourhood branches);
- responsive of children's needs;
- venue for peaceful and harmonious cross-generational and cross-cultural communication, promoting exchanges among people of different national origin, social backgrounds and lifestyles;
- establishing added community value through cooperation and networks; benefit of synergies.

Our most important tool is the annual strategic and operational plan.

How do customers react to the „Dance of Change"?

I have pleasure in presenting you the brand new results of a study conducted with the customers in the Central Library. The interviews were carried out in research partnership with the German Institute for Adult Education.

First of all: Who are the customers? The customers are very young, hardly more than 40 years old, there are nearly as many male as there are female users.

70 % have higher educational qualifications and 70% work at home with a computer.

The majority (80 %) come into the library to borrow books, to read, acquire information, and to look round.

Most people come for their own personal reasons (80 %), and the second biggest group (43 %) are here for reasons associated with school, work or professional qualifications.

Three quarters say that they discover books and other media which they were not looking for, either by chance, or through exhibitions and presentations.

What do the customers expect from the staff?

1. That they know their subject (83 %);
2. that they provide advice about the choice of books and media (75 %);
3. that they give motivation and inspiration (40 %);
4. that they collect and organise information (30 %).

Staff should have enough time, and be intelligent and good humoured (and not old moaners).

What do the customers expect from the library's design and what it has on offer?

1. Peace and quiet (80 %);
2. as many books and media as possible;
3. informed people;
4. access to databases;
5. access to the Internet.

In more detail:

- A place of quiet concentration, yet lively;
- cosy but modern;
- easy to find one's way around, and functional;
- pool of ideas and suggestions;
- comfortable and attractive seating, sofa landscapes, lounge with music, newspapers and magazins, Live DJs;
- gardens and plants;
- the atmosphere should be homely, open, bright and warm;
- a central information point is desired;

- a café;
- and good architecture.

What should we, as a learning organisation, now do with the results of the study? (Fig. 1)

Fortunately we have received money to enlarge our stocks of books and media from 300,000 to 500,000 volumes over the next ten years.

We will analyse the results of the study together with staff, and develop a training programme intended to improve the service we give. Last year, 3 % of the working time consisted of training activities with the main emphasis on computing. The study results have shown that subject and contents-related knowledge has to be improved. We need a strategy for building this competence. We have to implement knowledge within knowledge sharing.

And finally, we have to check whether the planned new library building fits in with the essential elements of the customers' dreams and needs.

We will have plenty of time to do this, since, regretfully, the beginning of the planning and building phases have been delayed.

The prizewinning library design by Eun Young Yi has been described worldwide as „Good architecture". (Fig. 2) The architect Eun Young Yi, born in Korea, designed a cube to be built of glass bricks - bright and translucent, crystalline, immense.

The Spatial Organisation (Fig. 3) shows the „Heart" as a room of inspiration and silence. The „*promenade*" around the Heart will be the stage for animation. There is an *open end area* and a café that could be developed into a lounge with music, with journals and beautiful plants.

Staff will be available in the learning studios and in the art rooms to give any specialist advice you may require. They will be happy to answer all the customers' questions. The offices and the learning studios are interconnected, enabling the members of staff to react quickly to the needs of the users.

The future task of the interior designers will be to make the library as modern and warm as the customers and staff dream it can be.

The dance of change means continuous improvement in a neverending and lively process.

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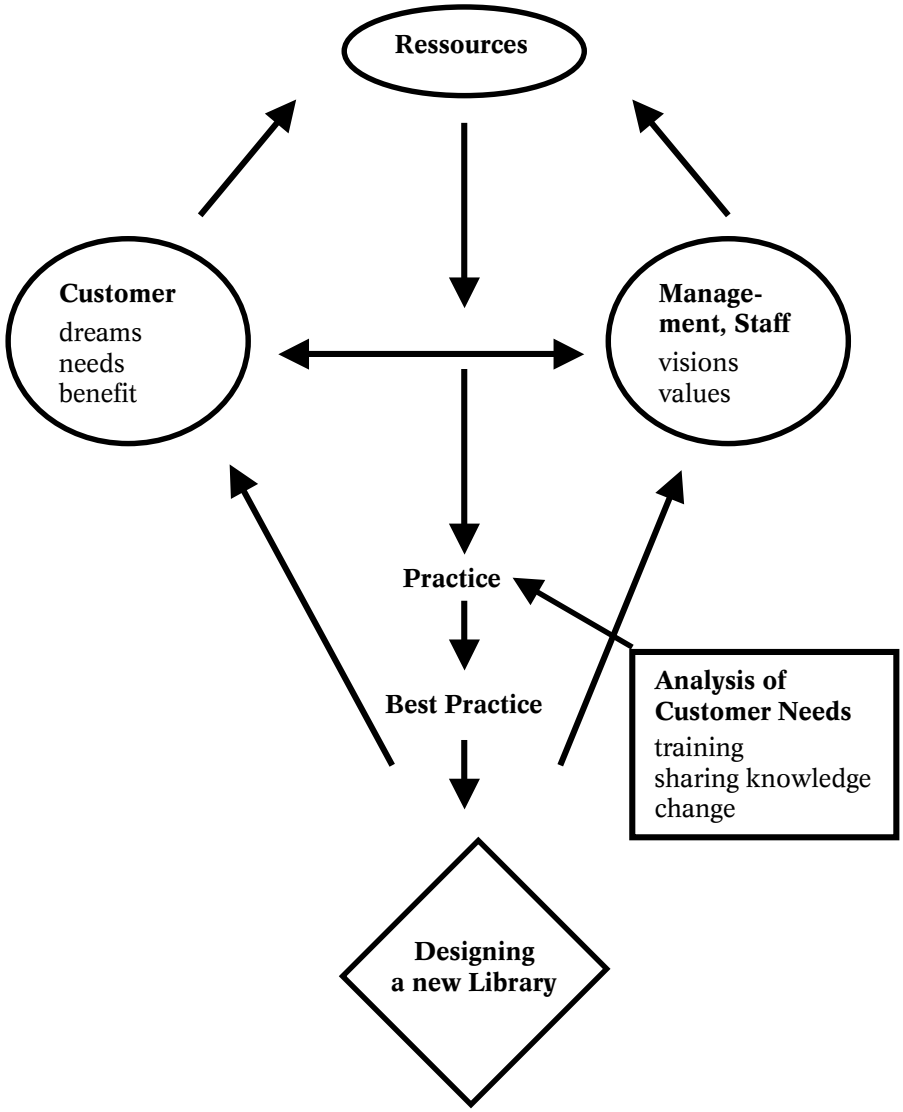

Figure 1

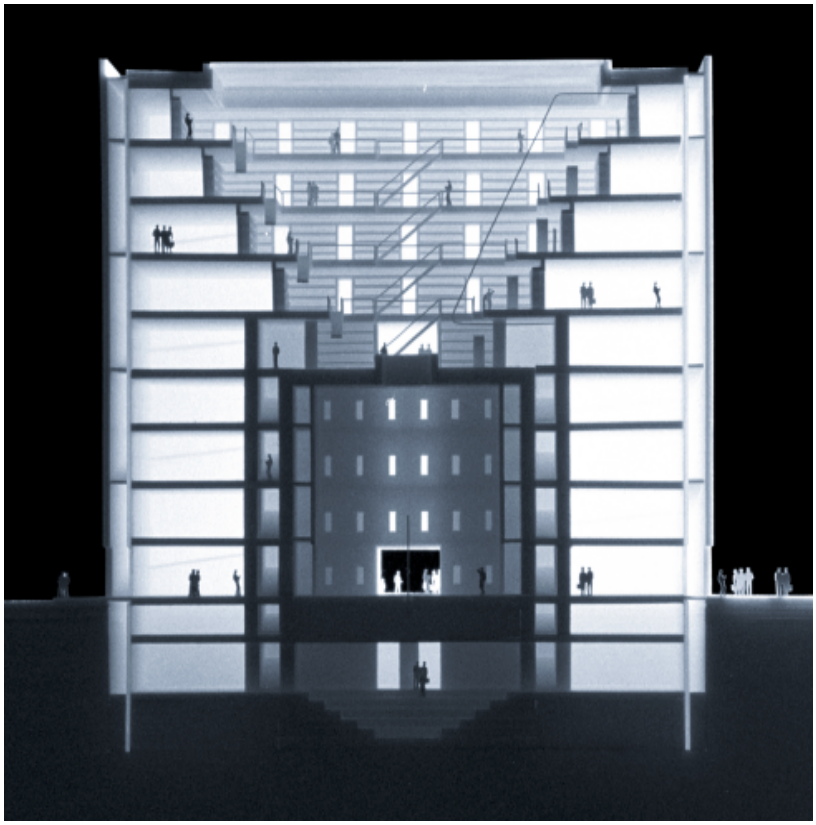

Figure 2

2.1. Spatial Organization

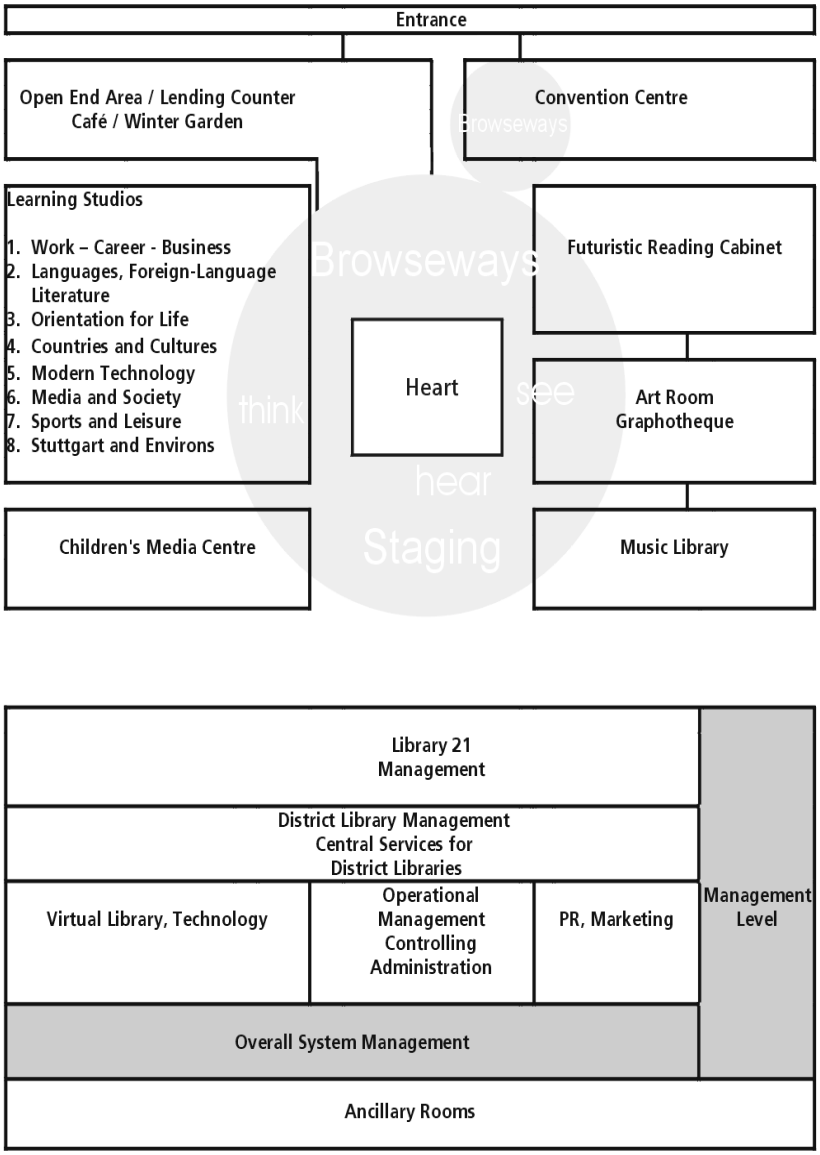

Figure 3