



REIMAGINE LIBRARIES

Sparking Collaboration for Innovation to Tackle Libraries' 21st Century Challenges

LibrarIN initial policy recommendations from the literature review

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Introduction



1. Introduction

Cultural institutions such as libraries play a key-role in social inclusion and cohesion. They create the sense of belonging, build shared identities, promote cultural awareness and historical reflection, improve people's well-being and contribute to sustainable development and growth at local, regional and national level. The European Union Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026 sees libraries as gateways to and transmitters of cultural works, skills and European values.² They provide equal access to information and thus promote people's individual growth. Libraries as public services are facing European challenges of the 21st century. Many of these challenges are shared with museums, galleries and other cultural institutions, as the OECD and UNESCO, and library associations like LIBER have declared recently.

Libraries are tasked to deliver efficient high-quality public services and improved capacity to deal with societal challenges, such as the ones included under the New European Bauhaus, European Green Deal and United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development initiatives.³ In the case of public libraries, the societal challenges are met with an increasing demand for the sector's innovations to cope with the growing complexity of public library challenges. This is reflected in the current discourse between what citizens demand and the responses offered by these institutions.

'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)⁴



Libraries are democratic institutions and an ideal place for collaborations between different types of people to confront societal challenges such as racism or discrimination. This collaboration can be materialised in different types of services, from educational or scientific to cultural or artistic expressions, confirming libraries' important cultural and social mission in today's Europe.

Social innovation in public libraries and citizen participation in the future of libraries are increasingly important trends.⁵ Reimagine libraries. LibrarIN's initial policy recommendations from literature review aim to spark collaboration for innovation to tackle libraries' 21st century challenges.

² "European Union Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026", Official Journal of the European Union, 07 December 2022.

³ New European Bauhaus. The European Green Deal.

⁴ Co-VAL (2021) Understanding Value Co-creation in Public Services for Transforming European Public Administration. Web page <https://www.co-val.eu/>.

⁵ Eline Leblanc, "Top-Down and Bottom-up Approaches to Identify the Users, the Services and the Interface of a 2.0 Digital Library," *Research and Advanced Technology for Digital Libraries. TPDL 2017. Lecture Notes in Computer Science* (vol. 10450). Springer, Cham, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67008-9_59.

Abul Kalam Siddike, Katsuhiro Umemoto and Youji Kohda, "Transformation of Public Libraries: Co-creation of Values at Multipurpose Community Learning Centers," *IIAI 3rd International Conference on Advanced Applied Informatics, 109-114*, Kokura, Japan, 2014, doi: 10.1109/IIAI-AAI.2014.32.

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Evidence and Analysis

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2. Evidence and Analysis

In both academic and public libraries, **collaboration has brought many substantial changes and transformations**, giving rise to a wide range of innovations in libraries now offering social, business, educational, creative and even health services. Likewise, **technological advances improve and facilitate this collaborative approach, and even change the way libraries offer their traditional services** such as collecting, describing and preserving.⁶ Academic libraries involved in the European Library initiative for example, have started building virtual libraries and common catalogues.

*'The LibrarIN literature review shows that collaboration stands as one of the most important elements in innovation strategies for libraries in the 21st century.'*⁷

As in many other contexts, collaboration for innovation in libraries has its own barriers and challenges.⁸ Efficient strategies, policies and practices to enhance the innovative performance of libraries are needed. **This policy brief is targeted at library policymakers, practitioners and funders. It aims to promote innovation and co-creation in libraries focusing on "effective collaboration" as its cornerstone.**



⁶ Oddrun Pauline Ohren, "The National Library Of Norway: Policies and Services", *Bibliographic Control in the Digital Ecosystem*, 234-245, University Press Firenze, 2022.

⁷ Luis Rubalcaba, Paul Windrum, Ernesto Solano, Kirsi Hyytinen, Tiina Tuominen, Sari Vainikainen, and Varun Gupta, "D2.1 Conceptual Framework and Model of Participatory Management and Sustainable Growth v1.0", *LibrarIN*, 2023. Stephen Abram and Jamal Cromity, "Collaboration: the Strategic Core of 21 Century Library Strategies", *New Review of Information Networking*, 18(1), 40-50, 2013.

Jennifer Rowley, "Innovation for Survival: From Cooperation to Collaboration", *Librarianship in Times of Crisis* (Advances in Librarianship, Vol. 34), Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 207-224, Leeds, 2011 [https://doi.org/10.1108/S0065-2830\(2011\)0000034013](https://doi.org/10.1108/S0065-2830(2011)0000034013).

Gary W. White, "The Library as a Center for Innovation: A Collaboration at the University of Maryland," *Space and Organizational Considerations in Academic Library Partnerships and Collaborations*, 68-86, IGI Global, 2016.

Jeremy Atkinson, "Collaboration by Academic Libraries: What are the Benefits, What are the Constraints, and What do You Need to do to be Successful?" *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 25(1), 1-7, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2019.1575016>.

Rebecca Bryant, Brian Lavoie, and Amanda K. Rinehart, "Building Research Data Management Capacity: Case Studies In Strategic Library Collaboration," *OCLC Research*, Dublin Ohio, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.25333/aglk-3s72>.

⁸ Ladislava Zbieczuk Suchá, Eliška Bartošová, Roman Novotný, Jiřina Bělehradová Svitáková, Tomáš Štefek, Eva Vichová, "Stimulators and Barriers towards Social Innovations in Public Libraries: Qualitative Research Study", *Library & Information Science Research*, 43(1), 101068, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2020.101068>.

Joseph Winberry and Devendra Potnis, "Social innovations in public libraries: Types and challenges," *The Library Quarterly*, 91(3), 337-365, 2021.

Collaboration as a “strategic choice” for library innovation

Literature shows that library innovation is an underdeveloped topic, in need of additional empirical inquiry.⁹ There is rarely any classification of innovations proposed using empirical research on innovations in libraries or grounded in the library science literature.

'Literature reviews all provide ideas and examples that may help generate creative solutions; however, none of them are very helpful to novices looking to learn more about the basics of innovation in libraries or identifying best practices for implementing innovation in libraries'. - Lorraine Pellack (2022).¹⁰

Nevertheless, recent definitions and approaches for innovation in libraries suggest that collaboration between parties should be at the core of changes, transformations and innovations in libraries, both in public and academic.¹¹

'In the field of innovation in libraries collaboration is understood as a “strategic choice” to improve the quality and efficiency of services, it is about working collectively with a group of organisations, stakeholders or users'. - Brian Lavoie (2022).¹²

Collaboration in libraries can have two major foci.

- **It can refer to an association or partnership between libraries and other organisations wanting to improve and transform library services to address societal needs.**
- **Or it can refer to collaboration between individual users engaged in the development, implementation, and evaluation of library services.**

Although both types place user participation at the core of service development, the strategies to promote either of them vary greatly. LibrarIN will address the difference and design tailored policy recommendations in a geographical and economic variable library landscape, in a next policy brief.

⁹ Devendra Dilip Potnis, Joseph Winberry, and Bonnie Finn, “Best Practices for Managing Innovations in Public Libraries in the USA,” *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 53(3), 431-443, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000620948567>.

Curtis Brundy, “Academic Libraries and Innovation: A Literature Review,” *Journal of Library Innovation*, 6(1) 22-39, 2015

¹⁰ Lorraine J. Pellack, “Academic Library Innovation: A Selective Review,” *Library Leadership & Management*, 36(3) 2022. <https://doi.org/10.5860/llm.v36i3.7528>.

¹¹ Kirstie Nicholson, “Collaborative, Creative, Participative: Trends in Public Library Innovation,” *Public Library Quarterly*, 38:3, 331-347, 2019. DOI: 10.1080/01616846.2019.1571399

¹² Varun Gupta, Luis Rubalcaba, Chetna Gupta and Leandro F. Pereira, “Library Social Networking Sites for Fostering Startup Business Globalization through Strategic Partnerships,” *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 48(6), 102504, 2022

¹³ Brian Lavoie, “Library Collaboration as a Strategic Choice: Evaluating Options for Acquiring Capacity,” OCLC Research, Dublin Ohio, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.25333/mt16-0c57>.

Although collaboration for innovation is difficult to define, it involves free and voluntary exchanges between multiple organisations, stakeholders and users all set to achieve a shared goal.¹³ The user's voice should be guiding in this entire process of design, implementation and evaluation of innovative library services.¹⁴ In addition, collaboration in libraries can be associated with many different practices, from big partnerships between libraries and technological parks to participative sessions where citizens can express their needs or ideas.¹⁵

When reviewing literature on existing collaborative practices in libraries, LibrarIN researchers identified emerging concepts that show how collaboration with stakeholders in a library can improve its services and the quality of life of its community. LibrarIN lists a set of concepts and collaborative practices as examples, aiming to inspire the innovators in libraries. **A strategy that proves effective in one setting might not be suitable in different contexts with varying needs. This could unintentionally exacerbate regional inequalities, both between and within states.** The focus of this policy brief is collaboration itself and how this can have such an impact on libraries that it can reach forms such as those presented in table 1.¹⁶

Table 1. Examples of collaboration practices in libraries

Collaboration practices	Example case studies
Smart Libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DTU smart library • New Town Library
Participatory library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De Krook Library • Novi Sad City Library
Citizen Science in libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Science in Action • Citizen Science at your Library Program
Library Living labs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barcelona Library Living Lab • Dokk1
Library 2.0 and 3.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science and Research Branch of Tehran
Innovation hubs in libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toaster Innovation Hub
Digital Libraries for collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Society • Digitālo bibliotēku
Learning Spaces and makerspaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Virginia Makerspace • Forward Space
Partnerships	No data

¹³ Phil Brown., Caspar Von Daniels, Nancy M.P. Bocken and Ruud Balkenende, "A Process Model for Collaboration in Circular Oriented Innovation," *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 286, 125499, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.125499>.

¹⁴ Jacob Torfing, "Collaborative Innovation in the Public Sector: the Argument," *Public Management Review*, 21:1, 1-11, 2019, DOI: 10.1080/14719037.2018.1430248.

¹⁵ Literature shows that collaboration in libraries can be associated with many different practices:

Tien-Chie Huang, "What Library 2.0 has taught Libraries in Taiwan about e-Learning," *The Electronic Library*, Vol. 33 No. 6, 1121-1132, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1108/EL-04-2014-0070>.

Dnyaneshwar Jadhav and Dinesh Shenoy, "Measuring the Smartness of a Library," *Library & Information Science Research*, Volume 42, Issue 3, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2020.101036>.

Ryan Mattke, Kirsten Deleard and Danya Leebaw, "Mapping Prejudice: The Map Library as a Hub for Community Co-Creation and Social Change," *Journal of Map & Geography Libraries*, 18:1-2, 1-21, 2022, DOI: 10.1080/15420353.2022.2076006.

¹⁶ Stephen P. Osborne, Madeline Powell, Tie Cui, Kirsty Strokosch, "Value Creation in the Public Service Ecosystem: An Integrative Framework," *Public Admin Rev*, 82: 634-645, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13474>.

Barriers and challenges to social innovation in libraries

In some cases, the collaborative approach has redefined the entire library conception, giving them a broader service offer and making libraries spaces of encounter, participation and engagement between all kinds of stakeholders. These practices show that collaboration is relevant for both public and academic libraries, and that the differences between these types of libraries may be less pronounced as previously thought.¹⁷ Recommendations in this document are targeted at all kinds of libraries such as public or municipal, national and academic libraries.

There are not many studies that offer classifications on the barriers or challenges to collaboration in libraries. Instead, there is relevant research performed on the challenges to social innovation in libraries, and in its turn collaboration is recognised as a cornerstone of social innovation.¹⁸ A selection of different types of barriers and challenges to social innovation in libraries, as found in academic literature, is presented in table 2.¹⁹

Table 2: barriers and challenges to social innovation in libraries found in academic literature

Winberry and Potnis (2021)	Suchá et al (2021)	Chuang et al 2019
1. Measurement 2. Education 3. Librarian Identity 4. Partnerships 5. Communication 6. Funding 7. Guidance 8. Political will 9. Community support	1. Structural 2. Local 3. Organisational 4. Personal	1. Environmental 2. Organisational



¹⁷ Laura Saunders and Mary Jordan, "Significantly different? Reference services competencies in public and academic libraries," *Reference and User Services Quarterly*, 52(3), 216-223, 2013.

¹⁸ Luis Rubalcaba, Ernesto Solano, "The Pros of Social Innovation," *Debating Innovation*. Palgrave Debates in Business and Management. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-16666-2_8.

¹⁹ Monica Edwards-Schachter and Matthew L. Wallace, "Shaken, but not Stirred: Sixty Years of Defining Social Innovation," *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 119, 64-79, 2017.

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Policy Implications and Recommendations

3. Policy Implications and Recommendations

Promoting the “strategic choice” of collaboration and overcoming barriers to social innovation in libraries, the LibrarIN project offers an initial set of actionable policy recommendations. Adding to the current debate as presented in guiding policy and strategy documents:

1.

Council of Europe recommendation on library legislation and policy in Europe.²⁰

2.

Strategies and recommendations provided by library organisations LIBER, IFLA, CENL and EBLIDA.

3.

Academic literature on strategies for collaboration in libraries.²¹

4.

European Union work plan for culture 2023-2026.²²



²⁰ Recommendation CM/REC(2023)3 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe, April 2023

²¹ Academic literature on strategies for collaboration in libraries reviewed:

Jeremy Atkinson, “Collaboration by Academic Libraries: What are the Benefits, What are the Constraints, and What do You Need to do to be Successful?” *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 25(1), 1-7, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2019.1575016>.

Richard Parsons, “SCONUL Shared Services: A Toolkit for Library Collaboration,” *SCONUL*, 2016.

Devendra Dilip Potnis, Joseph Winberry and Bonnie Finn, “Best practices for managing innovations in public libraries in the USA,” *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 53(3), 431-443, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1177/096100620948567>.

²² Open Method of Coordination (OMC) Group of Member States’ experts on Building Bridges: Strengthen the Multiple Roles of Libraries as Gateways to and Transmitters of Cultural Works, Skills and European Values, Brussels, 16 October 2023.

3.1 The gaps in library policies related to co-creation

The main gaps that the LibrarIN project has identified in existing strategic plans, frameworks and policies aiming to improve the quality of services in libraries are:

- 1. Collaboration and co-creation of service innovation between library stakeholders is not fully considered or developed.** Most official strategies studied mention the social dimension of libraries and consider its relevance for nowadays societal needs. But concrete policy areas and strategies for governments and library managers to foster effective collaboration and co-creation, are rarely defined.
- 2. There is little or no specification of the type of collaboration.** Although collaboration in libraries places user participation at the centre of its service development, it has two foci each requiring their tailored strategy:
 - a)** The partnerships between libraries and other organisations established to improve and transform library services in alignment with the community's needs.
 - b)** The participatory activities in which individual users are engaged in the development, implementation, and evaluation of library services.
- 3. Existing strategies appear to overlook the variety of services offered by libraries today that can be co-created.** Libraries can offer educational, creative, business, community and health services, and in each of these wide ranging areas collaboration plays a fundamental role. Likewise, collaboration might improve the way libraries offer their traditional services. Libraries must consider what type of service they want to enhance or promote when implementing any collaboration promotion policy.



3.2 Sparking collaboration for innovation to tackle libraries' 21st century challenges

Considering the policy gaps identified, the LibrarIN project proposes a series of actionable policy recommendations adding to the current policy debate. These policy recommendations are based on the evidence obtained from the LibrarIN project as well as the policy briefs from the Co-val project. **LibrarIN applies the Co-val principles on value co-creation and to transform public administration services and processes to the world of libraries**, as shown in the following figure.²³

Figure 2. Policy focus areas for co-creation and innovation in libraries, as identified by LibrarIN



²³ Charlotte van Ooijen and Francesco Mureddu, Co-VAL Policy Brief IV Co-Creation at Scale: How Service Design, Living Labs and Innovation Networks Help Public Servants Deliver Better Services, *Issue 26/2021*.



Like Co-VAL, LibrarIN identifies four policy focus areas, each based on a set of actionable recommendations for library policymakers, practitioners and funders. While the next section details each of these four policy focus areas, it is important to note that collaboration must also be part of a library's organisational structure and methods overall.

A Six co-creation library service areas

Libraries are no longer limited to being providers of information, documents or books, on the basis of literature review of public libraries, LibrarIN proposes six types of co-created services applicable to all types of libraries.²⁴

Depending on the type of library, there will be a greater propensity to offer one type of service or another. However, these differences are not significant as already identified in section two. Therefore, LibrarIN proposes one general set of co-created services, applicable to all types of libraries.

LibrarIN proposes six types of co-created services applicable to all types of libraries:

1. Reading and education services.
2. Research services: particularly relevant in academic libraries.
3. Community, social and cultural services.
4. Health and wellbeing services.
5. Creativity services.
6. Business, financial and entrepreneurship services.

LibrarIN guidelines for a collaborative library service development

Libraries must strategically define which service areas should be developed, based on the user and community needs, following:

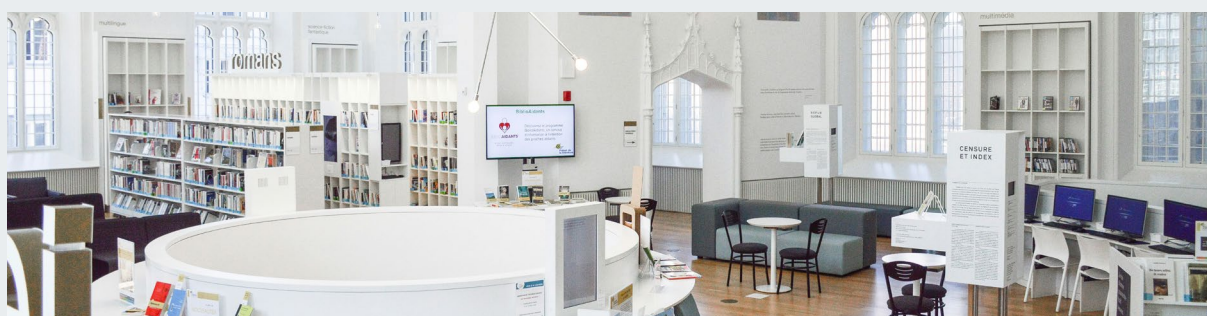
- **Research and study of social needs:** new service implementation must be based on existing needs of society previously studied.
- **Identification of strategic partners** mapped to the type of co-creative service to be developed.
- **User participation** is key in every collaboration and must be guaranteed by the inclusion of user associations in the development of library services.

²⁴ Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTT), "Literature Review of Innovation in Public Libraries," *LibrarIN Project*, 2023.

B Three thematic areas

LibrarIN proposes three thematic areas for collaboration and co-creation in libraries, aligned with the LibrarIN case study topics.

No.	Thematic area	LibrarIN Recommendations
1	<p>Digital transformation and information- and communications-technology (ICT) for collaboration and co-creation.</p> <p>Technological advances have not only changed the way libraries offer their traditional services, digital transformation and artificial intelligence (AI) have the potential to significantly improve the collaborative approach that libraries have been developing in recent times.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Definition of digital tools for collaboration and co-creation in libraries. 2. Programs to improve digital and AI skills of library staff. 3. Promote the use of technology as a means for collaboration among librarians and users. 4. Promote the development of smart libraries, as one of the most relevant technological collaborative innovations.
2	<p>The library as a space for collaboration, social entrepreneurship and partnerships.</p> <p>Most innovative libraries in Europe, such as The Black Diamond in Copenhagen, Oodi in Helsinki or Dokk1 in Aarhus, are conceived as ideal spaces for people to meet and work together in a wide variety of areas. LibrarIN proposes libraries to become that space for social entrepreneurs, innovators, artisans and artists. A space where the community can establish new micro-enterprises and exploit innovations. Libraries can help consolidate public-private networks and partnerships that increase the quantity and quality of their services offered.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organise and prepare well equipped physical spaces in the library for collaboration, meetings, group work and co-creation activities with users and stakeholders. 2. Create customised educational and training programs to support social entrepreneurship. 3. Build partnerships with entrepreneurs, organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGO), users and stakeholders to actively address societal challenges and implement innovative projects. 4. Provide entrepreneurial support to startups.
3	<p>Innovation and living labs in libraries.</p> <p>Innovation and living labs are open arenas set within an organisation, for co-innovation and co-creation between citizens and public service providers. Able to contribute to transformations of public libraries in significant ways by providing such an institutional arrangement of co-innovation. Through a living lab, the library can not only offer an ideal space for collaboration and co-creation, but can also actively participate in these processes. Citizen involvement takes time and careful planning.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define who should participate in the living lab to improve user driven innovation, open innovation and collaboration. 2. Include stakeholders and strategic allies as the key actors, when rolling out a living lab. 3. Promote participatory library projects through living labs, to encourage citizen involvement in the generation of library services. 4. Pay special attention to library users in the living lab, determined by the type of library.



C Cross-cutting co-creation policy areas

We propose five cross cutting policy areas for collaboration and co-creation in libraries, built on the Co-VAL project principles.

No.	Cross-cutting co-creation policy area	LibrarIN Recommendations
1	<p>Strategic frames for collaboration in libraries.</p> <p>LibrarIN proposes to follow the strategic frames for collaboration in libraries by Lavoie (2022) to promote collaboration in libraries.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Carefully coordinate collaboration activities between the library and its stakeholders to avoid overlapping activities. Identify all transaction costs in the collaboration activities foreseen, not just the financial costs. Manage the change aversion in libraries that is inherent to the complexity of library institutions. Control and monitor the collaboration activities, to understand their impact.
2	<p>Make stakeholder participation easy.</p> <p>Even if libraries are entirely ready for co-creation and enthusiastic about developing user-centred services, they still need the support of key external stakeholders. It is vital to break down the barriers that block sustainable co-creation.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Make co-creation an integral part of the digital-service experience. Develop strategies to invite stakeholders to participate. Find ways to involve vulnerable groups in co-creation activities in a structural way. Identify strategic stakeholders and relevant user associations.
3	<p>Ensure organisational support.</p> <p>It is crucial to ensure that co-creation initiatives across various libraries are well-coordinated and have access to the required skills and resources. Central coordination can enhance the efficiency and foster synergies, transitioning from a fragmented approach to a centralised model of co-creation.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure access to co-creation specialists to share the necessary knowledge and capacities. Incite cultural change.
4	<p>Best practice benchmarking and managerial tools promoting innovation</p> <p>Across Europe there are a number of good practice examples on collaboration and co-creation that changed the focus and function of libraries. Libraries should create or ensure access to a database of good practices that can be used for references.</p>	<p>To create this database, LibrarIN recommends:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> identify trends in library services. Make a selection of libraries or library services that will be used as a benchmark. Implement the needed changes.
5	<p>Monitoring and evaluation framework</p> <p>All economic activities must have an evaluation framework that allows them to be corrected and improved.</p>	<p>Such a monitoring activity should consider the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Key performance indicators (KPI) for evaluation and monitoring. Sound metrics. Evidence as a base for service design.

D Innovation policy areas

The innovation policy areas are directly related to the other three policy focus areas proposed (service, thematic and co-creation), driving active stakeholder participation in library service development.

LibrarIN recommends library policymakers, practitioners and funders to invest in the following innovation policy areas:

- **Research and development for innovation in libraries.**
- **Direct promotion of new or improved library services.**
- **Policies towards improving the library innovation ecosystems.**
- **Differentiation of traditional library services from co-created and innovative services.**





**LibrarIN.
Value Co-creation and
Social Innovation for
a New Generation of
European Libraries**

About LibrarIN

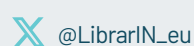
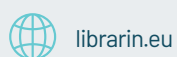
LibrarIN aims to discover, analyse and provide managerial and policy recommendations for transformative strategies that integrate the co-creation of value in public libraries. This will be achieved by introducing a new model of public service and social innovation. The project intends to explore how to co-create value for individuals and society through the design and delivery of library services.

LibrarIN is a Horizon Europe research project runnings from November 2022 to October 2025.

The LibrarIN consortium consists of 10 partners from 9 countries:



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