

ENGLISH



# REIMAGINE LIBRARIES

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

LibrarIN initial policy recommendations  
from literature review

**Policy Brief #1**  
**Teaser**

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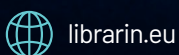
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## Libraries 21st century challenges

Libraries are much more than book archives, they are cultural institutions that play a key-role in social inclusion and cohesion. They create a sense of belonging, build shared identities, promote cultural awareness and historical reflection, improving people's well-being and contributing to sustainable development and growth at all levels. Libraries as public services are facing European challenges of the 21st century. Libraries are tasked to deliver high-quality public services and improved capacity to help deal with societal challenges, such as the ones foreseen in the New European Bauhaus, EU Green Deal and United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development initiatives. In the case of libraries, these challenges are met with an increasing demand for innovation, as reflected in the current discourse between what citizens demand and the responses offered by these institutions.



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## Social Innovation in Libraries

Social innovation in libraries and citizen participation in the future of libraries are increasingly important trends. However, literature review shows that library innovation is an underdeveloped topic. There is rarely any classification of innovations proposed using empirical research on innovations in libraries or grounded in the library science literature.

In this policy brief, LibrarIN summarises the main points from extensive literature review and provides policy recommendations and strategies to spark collaboration for innovation and tackle libraries' 21st century challenges, embedded in the current library policy debate.

*'The LibrarIN literature review shows that collaboration stands as one of the most important elements in innovation strategies for libraries in the 21st century' (LibrarIN, 2023).<sup>1</sup>*

## 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.**
- 2 There is little or no specification of the type of collaboration,** whether the library partners with an organisation or engages individual users.
- 3 Existing strategies appear to overlook the variety of services offered by libraries today that can be co-created.**

## Policy Implications and Recommendations

Adding to the current leading policy and strategy debate, LibrarIN offers a set of actionable recommendations to promote collaboration and co-creation in libraries.

### 1 Co-Creation Library Services

Libraries should develop services based on community needs, involving users and strategic partners in the process. Recommended service areas include reading and education, research, community and cultural services, health, creativity, and business.

### 2 Thematic Areas for Collaboration

- **Digital Transformation:** Define digital tools for collaboration, improve staff digital skills, and promote smart libraries.
- **Libraries as Collaboration Spaces:** Equip libraries as hubs for social entrepreneurship and innovation, supporting startups and partnerships.
- **Innovation and Living Labs:** Use living labs for co-innovation, involving stakeholders and users in library service development.

### 3 Cross-Cutting Policy Areas

- **Strategic Collaboration Frameworks:** Coordinate activities, manage change, and monitor impacts.
- **Stakeholder Participation:** Make co-creation integral to digital services and involve vulnerable groups.
- **Organisational Support:** Ensure access to co-creation specialists and promote cultural change.
- **Best Practices and Managerial Tools:** Create a database of successful collaborative practices.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Develop a framework with key performance indicators to guide service improvements.

### 4 Innovation Policy Areas

Investing in R&D, promoting new or improved services, enhancing innovation ecosystems, differentiating between traditional and co-created services, and adopting best practices for promoting innovation.

<sup>1</sup> 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.