The Municipal Libraries Network Supporting Sustainable Development Goals

Public Libraries Working Towards Sustainable Development

Diputació Barcelona
#DibaOberta
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1. The 2030 Agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

At the end of September 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through the resolution “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” with the aim of stimulating action in five critically important areas: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), unlike the Millennium Development Goals, which were directed at underdeveloped countries, can be applied universally, in all countries and all government levels, through a system of 17 SDGs, which will determine global action until 2030.

In order to achieve these targets, the whole world will need to get involved: from governments and the private sector, to civil society and individuals.
2. Libraries: Key Institutions to Achieving These Goals

2.1. International Level: IFLA’s IAP Program

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), launched at the start of the Agenda 2030, a series of activities to ensure that universal literacy be the main axis of sustainable development and that access to information, through libraries, become the natural process by which people achieve their own personal development.

The commitment and activism by IFLA alongside other organisations from the information sector, ensured that access to information, the safeguarding of cultural heritage, universal literacy and access to information and communication technologies were included in the Agenda’s framework and that they could be measured in Goal 16:

**Target 16.10 in the UN 2030 Agenda:**
Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

Within the framework of the UN 2030 Agenda, IFLA designed the International Advocacy Program (IAP), a program that contributes to linking libraries to development.

The IAP helps the library sector in developing the capacity to create and promote a policy framework that favours the valorisation of library services, establish and implement regional and national action agendas and create activities to raise awareness and promote libraries. With this program, IFLA wants to train librarians to become the agents of
planning and implementing the objectives of the 2030 Agenda in their communities. In addition, it encourages libraries to communicate their actions and the impact they have achieved in order to convince political, legal and economic leaders of the essential role libraries play with regards to development.

Currently, 73 countries are part of the IAP and contribute, with their services and activities, to the IFLA Library Map of the World, an online interactive map that shows those services or activities promoted by public libraries that are aligned with the SDGs.

2.2 State Level: Making the Impact of Libraries Visible

The Spanish Federation of Societies of Archivists, Librarians, Documentalists and Museologists (FESABID) in accordance with the IAP, is promoting at state level a program of actions and workshops focused on raising awareness among professionals, administration and citizens on the key role that libraries play in achieving these goals and how to intensify this through actions and services directed towards the needs of communities. These workshops bring to light a series of important aspects on the role of libraries in the 2030 Agenda:

- Data needs to be generated that will serve to monitor, measure and evaluate library activity that helps towards achieving the SDGs.
- The Agenda 2030 and the SDGs must be disseminated in order to transfer the challenges to the public sphere and raise awareness among citizens on the importance of a sustainable future.
- Librarians, through their diplomatic relationships with political decision-makers who determine public funding, must articulate a dialogue between citizens and political power, a key aspect of the 2030 Agenda.

Libraries must incorporate themselves in the sustainable development plans of governments and make their contribution visible.
Barcelona Provincial Council and Its Commitment to the SDGs

The territorial demarcation of Barcelona is the most populated in Catalonia and the second most populated in Spain. Its 5,511,000 inhabitants (74% of Catalonia’s population) live within an area of 7,700 Km² in 311 municipalities. Half of its municipalities have 3,000 inhabitants and 30 have over 30,000 inhabitants, with a high population density in the metropolitan area of Barcelona (3,225,000 inhabitants).

Barcelona Provincial Council is a local governmental institution that drives progress and the well-being of citizens in its territorial area acting directly by offering services, especially in collaboration with local entities.
Barcelona Provincial Council has a long history of field work in political advocacy in favour of the recognition of local and regional governments as indispensable actors in the achievement of the objectives of global agendas. It has designed a strategy for the implementation and localisation of the SDGs that encompasses different domains:

1. Implementing SDGs in the Barcelona Provincial Council
2. Supporting the territory in the implementation and localisation of SDGs
3. Driving the localisation of SDGs at international level

Barcelona Provincial Council’s mission is to strengthen the capacity of local governments to improve quality of life and contributing in this way to progress and territorial rebalance. It places people’s well-being, quality of public services, and respect towards the environment at the centre of political action.

In the framework of Domain 1, on Implementing SDGs in the corporation, 2 main actions stand out, which are the **Alignment of the 2016-2019 Action Plan Mandate with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs**, and the **Internal Awareness and Outreach Campaign** on the values that the SDGs transmit to Barcelona Provincial Council's staff.

Domain 2, on Supporting the territory in the implementation and localisation of SDGs, includes two further actions: **Support in the alignment** of the Mandate Plans or municipal strategies through the economic resources of the 2018 Catalogue of Services, and **training** of entities’ staff through a course on Introduction to SDGs within the framework of the Bank of Training Actions. It is also currently working out on an external **awareness and outreach campaign** of the values that the SDGs transmit directed at local entities as well as all citizens.

Finally, within Domain 3 on Driving the localisation of SDGs at international level, there are different initiatives led by Barcelona Provincial Council to share experiences of the territory in this area. For example, actions like participating in the writing of the **GOLD V Report** (planned for 2019) on the localisation of the global Agendas by local governments, supporting initiatives that ensure the recognition of local and regional governments as indispensable actors in the achievement of the SDGs through CGLU, participating in **forums and advocacy spaces**, **exchanging best practices** and profitability indicators on the localisation of SDGs at local level through state and European collection platforms, with the resolve to grant them visibility in the Voluntary National Reviews coordinated by the United Nations.
SÍ, M’HI COMPROMETO

Erradicar la pobresa

Combatre els efectes del canvi climàtic

Accés públic a la informació

Turisme sostenible i de proximitat

diba.cat/ODS

Diputació Barcelona

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Castelldefels. Ramon Fernández Jurado Library.
Photo: Óscar Ferrer
The Municipal Libraries Network of Barcelona Province

Barcelona Provincial Council (Diputació de Barcelona or Diba), through the Library Services Management Office (LSMO), offers services to local councils by creating and developing library services, and heads the Municipal Libraries Network of Barcelona Province (MLN) in order to guarantee a territorial balance and quality of library services, as well as equal access for all citizens to information, knowledge and culture.

The MLN currently has 225 libraries and 10 mobile libraries (Bibliobús), which provide services to 5,533,459 people living in 253 municipalities in the Barcelona province. This translates into 98% of the population in the province, of which half (2,726,493 people) own a library card that allows them to enjoy the services offered by public libraries.
The constant improvement in library infrastructure and in virtual services, which respond to the needs of analogical, semi-digital and digital users is also clear in the citizens’ response to this offer. Libraries registered 20 million visits during the year, both in-person and virtual, which means that every day almost 100,000 people interact with the library.

The libraries of the MLM manage a collection of over 10 million volumes, one that is growing continually and that is defined by the increase in e-books and open access titles. Over the last few years we have observed a change in lending habits: on the one hand, there is more diversity regarding the number of lent books, and on the other hand users who had stopped using the lending service have started using the e-book lending service: eBiblio Catalunya.

More and more, libraries serve as meeting places and spaces for personal development and the numbers prove this. In 2017, a total of 732,000 people participated in activities organised by libraries, which reaffirms the role libraries play as central agents of cultural dynamism in towns and cities. Moreover, in 2017 over 240,000 students visited the library with their school to learn how to use the resources available at these centres and improve their information research skills.

Beyond traditional services, in recent years, an effort has been made to bring library services closer to citizens through virtual environments, reducing the digital divide and making libraries more accessible. The presence of libraries in social networks is growing and users are combining the use of in-person services and virtual services. Thus, there has been an increase in visits to library websites, a noteworthy 17,340 daily visits to the Virtual Library, and the interaction between these and their followers on social networks.

The appearance of mobile support has also change trends in how people consume culture. In this sense, the BibliotequesXBM app registered, in 2017, over 45,000 downloads on Android and iOS systems, which means that monthly the app, which provides access to library services, receives an average of 17,000 visits.
Bibliolab: Towards a Future Model for Public Libraries

2017 saw the start of the deployment of the Bibliolab Program, a program created by the (MLN) that develops and offers support to actions that have as their objective access to knowledge through experimentation and innovative and creative methodologies, in a creative environment open to citizens. From July 2017 to April 2018 over 369 activities were held at 97 libraries in 55 municipalities in the province. These activities drive creativity and knowledge acquisition through experimentation, and allow for testing the interests in and response to these types of activities by citizens. The activities associated with the project have been very highly valued by users that participated in them (over nine points on a scale of zero to 10), who are mainly women. In this way, libraries are contributing to positioning women as agents of change and technological development in the country.

The goals of the Bibliolab Programme are:

- Boost individual and collective development through dynamic learning, creativity and innovation
- Offer access to and train citizens in creative technologies and digital production
- Promote the value of experience: experimentation has become the centre of a new learning model and must permeate all access to knowledge transversally
- Foster participation: involve the community in an active way in the creation and development of actions. Projects must have an extremely educational spirit, but in a critical and horizontal way, without directing or generating passive citizens.
- Increase the social value of public libraries: open its focus, emerge as an active agent that works and investigates new ways of producing knowledge and information and accompany its users in adapting to changes that come about.

Bibliolab is one of 10 projects featured in the 2016-2019 Action Plan Mandate (Pla d’Actuació de Mandat or PAM). With this program, Diba would like to boost citizens’ creativity, which is a skill of great value in the development of people in areas such as education, culture and entrepreneurship. It will do so under the criteria of equal access, economic sustainability, efficiency, quality of service and relevance, leveraging and underlining the resources and network work carried out by libraries, which are facilities close to citizens that are deeply rooted in the territory.
4.1 The MLN and Its Work with the SDGs

One of the LSMO's lines of work over the last few years has been to understand the capacity of libraries in the MLN to generate value for citizens and give libraries the tools that allow them to boost social value both in citizens and communities, through transversal and cooperative work.

Continuing with this commitment, the LSMO started a work process with the aim of aligning itself, alongside the Diba strategy and the area of libraries, with the SDGs in the UN’s 2030 Agenda. Convinced of the fact that public libraries play an essential role and that it is an opportunity to offer visibility to the work of public libraries in improving the lives of people and the communities where they are located, as agents in transforming the world, as the title of the UN’s 2030 Agenda states.

4.2 Background

The MLN’s commitment towards understanding and enhancing the usefulness of its services to citizens has led it to elaborate objective studies that demonstrate the positive impact of public libraries on the local environment and improvement challenges.

This work has been carried out in collaboration with a European network, concretely The Danish Think Tank – Libraries of the Future with the aim of sharing experience and knowledge on the impact and value of libraries and send a message to politicians both on a national and European level on the economic value of public libraries.

Public libraries play a crucial role as local agents of transformation of their users’ skills and knowledge and of the reality and dynamics of existing social relationships in their communities. In developing their functions in areas as diverse and essential as social, economic, cultural or educational life, libraries have configured themselves as community agents with the true capacity to contribute to the social transformation of their environment.

The SDGs will become an excellent opportunity for libraries and councils to coordinate their strategies and establish action plans over the coming years.

4.2.1 “The Value of Public Libraries in Society”

In 2014, the MLN published the study “The Value of Public Libraries in Society” (Togores, 2015) to understand the capacity of the Library Network to generate collective value for citizens and communicate and promote the value generated. It complements the study “Return on Investment of Municipal Libraries Network of the Barcelona province (2007-2011)” (Luria i Pintor, 2013), which provides information on the economic benefits of libraries through the ROI performance measure.

The study “The Value of Public Libraries in Society” identified, through revising specialist literature, the potential social benefits generated by public libraries and placed them in four domains of social impact.

For each benefit identified, the study distinguishes actions, tools and possible services public libraries could offer to contribute towards achieving them. In this way, the study serves also as a guide and as an inspiration so that libraries create actions focused on having a positive social impact.
The public library, therefore, depending on how it is configured, how it acts and how it interrelates with its environment, can play the essential role of local agent of social transformation in its community and impact directly on people’s lives.

4.2.2 The MLN’s Impact Studies

The results of the study “The Value of Public Libraries in Society” revealed that the main objective of the work, which was to measure the social impact of libraries, could not be achieved through indicators available up until then. New methods of analysis were needed and new indicators on concrete projects had to be identified.

For this reason, the LSMO carried out an analysis on the MLN’s social impact projects: the Easy Reading Book Club (ERB) and the Digital Skills Program for People Over 55.

Both the study on the social value of libraries and the impact studies were elaborated by the LSMO together with the Planning and Evaluation Service of the Barcelona Provincial Council.

Evaluation of the Easy Reading Book Clubs (ERB)

Through the Easy Reading Book Clubs (ERB), the MLN’s libraries make reading accessible to all citizens. In 2017, the LSMO evaluated the ERBs and carried out an in-depth study to measure the impact of the Club on its participants on both a cognitive and social level and evaluated the development of the project.

Results:
The most notable results were that participants of the ERBs increased their reading habits by 54% and visited the library and used its services more frequently.

The ERBs boosted the integration and social cohesion of their participants through improving their participation in collective activities and entities by 30%.
Evaluation of the Digital Skills Workshops for People over 55

The MLN’s libraries have organised multiple programs focused on reducing the digital divide. In collaboration with the Pere Tarrés Foundation and the Vodafone Foundation Spain, in 2014 it set up workshops on Digital Skills for People over 55, with the aim of improving the digital skills of this demographic and contribute towards reducing the digital divide. In the first two editions, almost 800 people participated across 27 MLN libraries.

To measure the degree of the achievement of objectives and the margin of improvement of the workshops, in 2016 the LSMO, together with the Catalan Institute of Evaluation and Public Policies (ivàlua) carried out a rigorous analysis using experimental methodology.

Results:
The results showed how participants of the workshops upped their use of the internet by around 25%.

The workshops had a positive impact on the frequency of use of social and leisure apps (two uses dealt with directly during the workshop) but did not detect a change in the social network of the participants neither in terms of quality nor in terms of size.
4.3 Work Program

In Autumn 2017, the LSMO designed a Work Program to contribute to sustainable development by defining actions framed within the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda that are closely related to the public library as identified in the FESABID work group.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:
SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

- 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
- 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

- 5.5 Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
- 5.5 Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

SDG 8: Promote continued, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

- 8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.
- 8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

- 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all level.
- 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.
- 16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.
ACTIONS PLANNED IN THE PROGRAM:

- **Awareness actions** on SDGs and the key role of libraries in the 2030 Agenda:
  - For librarians, political actors and citizens
- **Work with indicators:**
  - To evaluate the impact of projects already carried out
  - Pilot project focused on Goal 16 which will work especially with indicators set by the UN. Work will begin using indicators from two studies (Easy Reading Book Clubs and Digital Skills). In the long-term, during the new Mandate Plan (2020-2023), work will focus on how to report data aligned with the indicators set by the UN.
- **Compilation of Best Practices** that work towards the four goals mentioned above via the MLN’s existing Best Practices Bank. These will be incorporated into the IFLA Library Map of the World.
- **Training** library staff so that libraries become agents and raise awareness in users and citizens.
- **Communication actions:**
  - Create an internal communication space on the intranet.
  - Launch an institutional communication campaign during 2018-2019 and publish a corporate website on SDGs

BEST PRACTICES

The LSMO has for a long time been working on compiling best practices in libraries through the **Best Practices Bank**, a service that collects and disseminates current library practices that are evaluable, participatory, sustained, innovative and transferable. This bank incorporates the practices detected in the study on social value. Recently, a call was made to libraries to incorporate best practices related to the four goals towards which the LSMO will work. The practices include fields relating to SDGs. These practices will be checked to see if they can then be included in the **IFLA Map of the World** through the work of the IAP which is being carried out at national level by FESABID.

BEST PRACTICES ON SDGS IN LIBRARIES

**ODS 4: Ensuring learning opportunities for all**

Public libraries and the promotion of reading are inseparably linked, since stimulating reading habits is one of the main missions of this public service (IFLA/UNESCO, 1994). Libraries can, as a public service with free, and open universal access, contribute to the consolidation of thoughtful, competent and critical readers with an opinion. At the same time, it has a clear inclusive vocation, offering services and activities that bring reading and library resources closer to vulnerable people, especially people with functional diversity through collective cultural activities that favour personal development, social inclusion and equal access to all.

Book clubs, easy reading book clubs, creative writing activities are all an example of best practices in this area. Many are related to the surroundings (collaborations with hospitals, markets, day centres, entities) and in this way the library brings its services closer to people as well as participate actively in the social fabric of their community.

**ODS 5: Promoting gender equality**

Conscious of the mediatory capacity of the public library, local entities related to women are collaborating with MLN libraries to transmit their values and messages to citizens. Jointly, they
have organised workshops and activities to promote gender equality especially directed at children and young people. Interest centres have been created on the theme of gender (coeducation, co-responsibility, gender-based violence, gender equality) and some libraries offer their library as meeting places and places for activities by entities and collectives that favour empowering women, promoting relations and cohesion between members of the collectives and library users.

**ODS 8: The public library as a driving force of the local economy**
Public libraries have established themselves as community agents with the true capacity to revitalise and generate economic activity in the communities they are located. Especially since the start of economic crisis, MLN libraries started projects to favour inclusion of people in the job market by carrying out activities focused on job orientation and job search tools, training and basic skills and training for people who have not finished their studies or are in back-to-work schemes. Through reading and culture, they can increase their self-esteem and feel more confident to enter the job market. Local economic development through the conservation and dissemination of local culture and memory is also present in some of the practices collected.

**ODS 16: Promoting fairer societies through access to information**
Public libraries have an essential role in ensuring access to knowledge and culture for all citizens. We can find this democratizing role in access to information and culture spread across different areas of impact in the public library. At the MLN, there are practices related to access to knowledge such as school visits, activities that bring users closer to scientific or musical language as well as experiences that promote representative participation and social cohesion. Some examples are the work libraries do directly with new migrants to help them prosper in their new environment, bringing different cultures together through stories or humanitarian and tolerance activities in the library.
Public libraries as a neighbourhood service for local citizens have a key role in the development of their communities. They must be useful to citizens and respond to social challenges. The LSMO has for many years been working to identify and promote the value of libraries for citizens and has drawn a map of where the public library can have an impact (social benefits) and the services it needs to create to achieve these benefits. These benefits can be easily linked to the SDGs.

Traditional lines of action of libraries continue to be present but will need to be revised and adapted to meet citizens’ needs so that the library can continue to be an indispensable service for people.

The SDGs and BiblioLab offer a new library model that will mark the future of the MLN’s libraries. Rethinking the current model comes with its challenges regarding services (access to knowledge), space, the profession (advocacy), management and communication.

The way in which a citizen relates to this new library model also brings challenges, not only for libraries but also politicians and governments. Citizens will use the public library in a more active, participatory and collaborative way. Libraries will become neutral institutions of social and civil participation.

We would like to highlight three opportunities for libraries regarding SDGs, which our institution supports fully:

1 POSITIONING OF LIBRARIES
• The 2030 Agenda offers an opportunity for public libraries to make their day-to-day work on the development of people and communities visible.
• Libraries need to be seen as leading the way on SDGs at local level, position libraries at political level and promote the role of the library and its professionals (advocacy).
• In the territorial demarcation of Barcelona, through its catalogue of services, councils will receive support so that they work on SDGs. It is the opportunity and the moment for MLN libraries to lead these initiatives.
• The MLN is working completely aligned with national and international organisations (United Nations, IFLA, FESABID) with regards to work on SDGs. It uses the same structure and fields to interconnect projects from the network with other countries and gain national and international positioning.
2 LIBRARIES AS AGENTS OF AWARENESS TOWARDS SDGs

- Libraries have the responsibility to disseminate the 2030 Agenda and SDGs in order to transfer the challenges of the planet to the public sphere and raise awareness among citizens of the importance of a sustainable future.
- Through the publication of best practices, the MLN’s libraries share information and ways of doing.
- It is important to communicate results in an easy, attractive and friendly way to make people aware of the SDGs and position the library as a key agent in sustainable development.

3 TRANSVERSALITY

- It is necessary to work transversally. Library institutions must establish alliances and agreements with other institutions that contribute to sustainable development at local, regional, national and international level.
- In the territorial demarcation of Barcelona, libraries have an opportunity to align the library strategy with the strategy of local governments and position the public library.

EVALUATION CHALLENGE

All projects related to SDGs must foresee management and monitoring systems capable of providing relevant information both for management purposes of the project itself and gaining information and basic data to integrate into the monitoring and assessment process. Sharing this work at international level will become indispensable, requiring specialisation and technical skills.

Libraries must be efficient, responsible and transparent institutions and publish the results of their actions.

The MLN has a leadership capacity that affects a large part of the territory. This advantage means that the actions carried out in the network will have an extensive and significant impact. With BiblioLab, every project will be unique according to the territory and the MLN will establish synergies between its centres.

The political commitment to SDGs by Barcelona Provincial Council and the leadership of the LSMO in the MLN ensure that the actions carried out are given the resources and political support needed to develop successfully.