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Architectural Spaces of Libraries in the Expectations and Opinions of the Librarians of Krakow's Public Libraries

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Abstract. Public Libraries in Krakow – Poland's second-largest city – operated as four independent cultural institutions up to January 2017, each with a main library and over a dozen smaller branches. The organisational structure stemmed from the previous administrative division of Poland (1975-1998), in which the city of Krakow consisted of four large districts. In July 2016 the Krakow City Council decided to merge the four public libraries into one institution to be operating under the name of Krakow Library (Biblioteka Kraków), with one main library and nearly 60 branches. Preceding the consolidation process, the Krakow Municipality commissioned the Małopolska Institute of Culture (Małopolski Instytut Kultury, MIK) to conduct a research & consultation project in order to diagnose the existing network of libraries and to formulate recommendations for strategic planning of the new institution. Librarians' expectations regarding the architectural space of libraries and their opinions on the space of existing branches were surveyed by means of a participatory workshop for library employees. The paper presents the findings of the participatory workshop for the librarians and discusses them in the context of current library design guidelines.

1. Introduction

Wanting to remain important public structures, public libraries in many countries have undertaken intense efforts to both maintain current and attract new users in recent decades. To this end, apart from traditional roles associated with the collecting, documenting, storing and making their collections available, many of them take on the performing of new tasks associated with broadly understood culture, personal development, meetings and cooperation. The vision of a library *on the human scale, which is a library that is joyful, making it possible to drink coffee with cream [...] and thus a library that one visits eagerly and which will gradually transform into a machine for spending free time, like the Museum of Modern Art, where we can go to see a movie, take a stroll in the garden, look at statues and eat a two-course dinner* – as Umberto Eco outlined it in his famous presentation [1].

A significant element of this concept of the library is the offering of formal spaces, but mainly informal meetings. The concept of a library as a *third space*, which is a space in which people can satisfy their psychological need for belonging, apart from two basic areas of activity: the home and the place of work, is very heavily featured in scientific literature [2]. Libraries (as well as other cultural institutions, such as museums or community centres) are also being ascribed with influence on the building of social capital, which is being more and more often seen as a significant development resource, important both for individuals and entire communities [3]. The condition necessary for it to be gained is a physical space for interaction. The undoubted advantage of public libraries, which makes it possible to continue their missions associated with readership, as well as undertaking new efforts, is that



of the physical space that is available free of charge for all users. Public libraries operate on the basis of a network of branches that have been opened over entire decades, which function both in large cities, where this network is often well developed, as well as in smaller localities and rural areas, where a public library is sometimes one of the few cultural institutions and social spaces available to all free of charge. The attractiveness of public libraries is also increased by a location that is both central and comfortable in terms of circulation [4], as well as a continuity of operation in a given area, which results in a recognisability of the institution among the community that utilises it and that has been strengthened over time.

Due to the planned reorganisation of the network of municipal public libraries, the Office of the City of Krakow commissioned the Małopolska Institute of Culture (MIK) to perform a diagnosis of the functioning of its network and prepare recommendations regarding the operation of institution after its reform. The research and consultation project¹, whose completion took over three months, included, among other things, surveying all the 57 branches of the Krakow public library, an analysis of extant documents, case studies performed on six selected branches, participatory workshops with librarians and library users, expert panel meetings involving experts and officials, as well as open consultations with Krakow's residents. Rich and comprehensive research material was gathered during the carrying out of the project. The final effect of the project was its final report, titled *Biblioteka Kraków. Rozwój sieci miejskich bibliotek publicznych* ("Krakow Library. Development of a Network of Municipal Public Libraries in English") [5]. The author was a member of the research team that carried out the project, as well as a co-author of the final report.

This article, based on the material that was gathered during the carrying out of the aforementioned project, is focused solely on the issues of the space of municipal public libraries in Krakow. Its goal is the characterisation – in spatial terms – of existing public libraries, the presentation of the expectations of librarians in this regard and a discussion, which is to help in answering the question whether – and if so, then to what degree public libraries in Krakow are prepared – in terms of space – to carry out new tasks.

2. Surveying of the network of public libraries in Krakow

One of the goals of the research and consultation project was the performing of a survey of the buildings of the current four district libraries and all existing branches operating within the network of municipal (operated by the *gmina* – community in Polish) public libraries². A total of 57 libraries were surveyed. The research, apart from building surveying, also featured, among other elements, the photo essay method, a several-hours-long observation by the members of the team, as well as a self-evaluation questionnaire that was filled out by the manager of each branch. The information that was gathered included, among other things, the floor area of library premises, sections that operated as a part of each branch (e.g. an adults section, a children's corner section, a magazine reading room, etc.), the date of the start of the operation of each branch, the number of active users, the number of employees (employment positions) and the size of collections. The researchers carrying out the project evaluated, among other things, the technical condition of the premises, the availability of toilets for users, the adaptability of library premises to changes in interior arrangement, the legibility of function inside library premises,

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² The research and consulting project described in the article focused solely on public libraries in Krakow, financed by the local community government, the lowest level territorial government organ. In Krakow (which is a regional capital) there is also a voivodship public library which is operated by a higher level territorial government organ (the voivodship). It has one large building with a floor area of around a dozen or so thousand square metres.

the degree of their adaptation to persons with special needs (in terms of the accessibility of entrances, toilets, interior arrangements, spaces for parents with small children). The researchers graded the visibility of each library in the space of the city, the spaciousness of the premises and their furnishings from the point of view of a longer stay (several-hours-long). The building survey documentation of each branch was supplemented by a short, several-sentences-long characteristic written by the researchers.

During the analysis of the data that had been gathered, it was concluded that over half of the branches were small libraries, operating in premises with a floor area that did not exceed 100 m² (including staff facilities, with 10 branches having a floor area of less than 50 m²), while only 7 branches had a floor area greater than 200 m². The average floor area of premises, including staff facilities, was around 126 m². In over 85% of the branches there was a section or corner for children; other sections, apart from a library for adults, were encountered sporadically. The highest number of branches (11) started operating at their given location – with dates divided into decades – in the 1980's, while 17 branches began their operation at their current location in the twenty-first century. The branches were observed to be located in larger buildings, which primarily fulfil other functions apart from library-related ones – being townhouses and residential blocks, retail and service pavilions, etc. All of the branches combined had a total of around 135 thousand active users in 2015³, with their number in the case of individual branches ranging from between 240 and 14 000. Average employment at all branches amounted to 2,79 employment positions, however, payrolls did not exceed two employment positions at more than half of all branches, with there being only one branch employing 16 librarians. The combined size of the collection amounted to over 1,165 million books, which gave an average of around 20 500 books per branch. The researchers performing the surveying graded the technical condition of 42 of the 57 premises as good or very good. The functional and utilitarian standard of the premises were not evaluated as highly: as much as 65% of the branches did not have a toilet accessible to users; over half of them were either poorly or very poorly suited to altering their interior arrangement conditions. Only 26% of the branches operated in spaces which had been initially designed with a library in mind. The remaining branches operated in adapted spaces. The accessibility of the libraries to persons with special needs presented itself very unfavourably: entrances to 40% of the branches were not accessible for persons with a disability, while in 60% of the branches architectural barriers were also present inside libraries themselves. Toilets for disabled persons were found in only two branches, while a place for a parent with a small child (a diaper changing station, a place for feeding) was in only one branch.

In conclusion of the results of the surveying of the network of municipal public libraries in Krakow, it must be stated that the majority of the 57 branches were small premises (with a floor area, including staff facilities, not exceeding 100 m²), employing no more than two librarians and located in buildings which also fulfilled other functions. The branches had poor visibility within the space of the city, which was the result of both the location of individual premises (above the ground floor, deep inside a housing estate, etc.), the lack of a storefront-type window orientated towards a public space, as well as poor marking. Many of the branches were overloaded with collections to a degree that significantly hindered or outright prevented the carrying out of other activities than providing access to the collection within the library. In essence, they played the part of book rentals almost exclusively. Despite the good technical condition of their premises, the libraries did not offer conditions for residing inside them for a longer period of time: the vast majority of them did not feature a toilet available for users, access to drinks and food or wireless Internet. The adaptation of the premises to the needs of disabled persons and those with special needs, including parents with small children, presented itself very poorly.

Among the public libraries in Krakow there was a lack of flagship sites that could stand out through their architecture. Even the large branches (with a floor area exceeding 200 m²) occupied premises that were a part of larger buildings and did not stand out within the space of the city. The matters of architecture and the functional and spatial solutions of the branches thus affected primarily their plan

³ According to data provided by General Statistics Office of Poland (GUS), Krakow's population count at the end of 2015 amounted to 761 thousand.

(the floor plan of the given premises), storefront-type windows providing visibility of the library to the outside, and to a large degree – interior arrangement solutions (interior design).

3. Participatory workshop as a method of identifying the needs of librarians

In order to identify and gather the opinions of library employees on the subject of the desired utility standard of the branches, as well as to develop recommendations regarding functional and spatial standards, in addition to the branding of the newly established institution and its branches – the Krakow Library – as a part of the research and consultation project being carried out by the Małopolska Institute of Culture, a three-hour-long participatory workshop with librarians – the employees of municipal public libraries that operated in Krakow – was organised. Sixteen librarians and four moderators took part in the workshop. The workshop was organised in largest public library of Krakow, outside of the working hours of the branch. Over the course of eight fifteen-minute-long sessions, the participants of the workshop, in four-person groups and with the help of a moderator, discussed the functional and spatial aspects of the arrangement of library spaces, which were grouped as follows:

- location, accessibility and visibility
- walls, the floor, lighting
- the library counters
- shelves and book cases,
- children's and young adult's sections
- computer workstations
- seating
- staff and hygienic facilities, storage

The groups of problems listed above, which were suggested by the moderators, reflect the previously described characteristic of the public library network in Krakow, which means that they primarily refer to the functionality and aesthetic of the interiors of the premises and their physical accessibility and marking.

The research method that had been adopted – that of the participatory workshop – was conducive to the active involvement of the participants in the discussion and the extension of the statements of other users, while working in small, five-person groups enabled each of the participants to speak out on each of the eight subjects. The most important findings of the workshop have been presented in the following paragraphs.

3.1. Location, accessibility and visibility

In the part pertaining to location, accessibility and visibility of a library's premises, the participants of the workshop pointed out the importance of the good location of a branch, near major pedestrian paths, in the vicinity of public transport stops, near commercial streets. The participants of the workshop spoke negatively on the topic of establishing branches in premises equipped with access restriction (e.g. doorbell, entry phone), due to the unreliability of these devices, the involvement of librarians in opening doors and creating a psychological barrier, which, when combined, lead to a drop in the number of visits.

Numerous librarians pointed to the problem of the poor adaptation of library branches to the needs of people with disabilities. Not providing this legally required accessibility is also an inconvenience for other groups of users, e.g. parents with small children in strollers or for seniors. Discussing the subject of accessibility, the need for spaces to park strollers was also highlighted.

Nearly all of the participants highlighted a lack of a systemic solution considering the branding of library branches (signs, logos), as well as the imperfection of the municipal system of information, which directs the city's residents and visitors to historical monuments, offices and other important places. Public libraries are not included in this system. According to librarians, many residents do not know where libraries are located. This is associated with the problem of the operation of libraries within the space of the city. The participants postulated that libraries should have a large storefront-type window,

orientated towards a public space. Such a storefront should support the library's operations through showing its interior and the activities that take place inside.

3.2. *Walls, the floor and lighting*

In the discussion concerning the subject of the preferred wall and floor finishes, the participants primarily pointed to the practical aspects of proposed solutions: the walls should be durable and easy to clean; the floors should be flat (without differences in height), quiet (damping the sounds of book carts), washable, in a neutral colour. According to librarians it is permissible to use different materials or colours of the floor to demarcate special purpose zones, but this should not limit the flexibility of an interior. In children's sections, according to librarians, carpet flooring should be used, as well as bean bags and pillows laid out on the floor. The walls should be in bright, pastel colours. According to the participants, intensive wall colours should be avoided, because residing in such spaces is tiring to employees. The respondents pointed out the special use of walls: in places where walls constitute a background for exhibitions, the most desirable colour was reported as white; these spaces should also feature a system for the hanging of exhibits; one solution that works very well in the children's section is chalkboard paint that can be drawn upon; the walls and floors should include an appropriate number of power outlets for the plugging in of the users' own computers.

Regarding the matter of the lighting of interiors, the librarians pointed out that even though daylight is desirable as the basic source of illuminating interiors, its excess is sometimes a problem; in libraries where this problem does occur, it should be solved through design. Lighting using artificial light, in turn, must be up to appropriate standards and needs to enable the smooth adjustment of lighting intensity in zones such as the library counter, author meeting space and the novelty corner. Numerous librarians highlighted the need of appropriately lighting the passages between book cases using lighting fixtures integrated with the cases themselves (a solution that does not limit an interior's flexibility) or through top lighting that is coordinated by design (a solution that limits the flexibility of an interior).

3.3. *The library counters*

The majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the library counter is the most important piece of furniture in a library. The respondents underlined the fact that the library counter fulfils many functions, ones that are not limited to book rental, but also associated with documenting the collection. The counter should be located at a certain distance away from the entrance, facing those entering the library with its front or side. At the same time, the placement of the counter should enable the librarian to observe a relatively large part of the library's interior. The orientation of the counter should make it impossible for users to move behind a librarian's back. Furthermore, the respondents voiced numerous detailed postulates concerning the functionality and ergonomics of this piece of furniture as a workstation.

In visual terms, according to the respondents, the counter should be an individual piece of furniture, distinct for each branch. Simultaneously, librarians pointed to the most desired quality of the counter being its neutrality rather than a striking appearance.

3.4. *Book cases and shelves*

In their statements concerning storage, the participants of the workshop expressed support for solutions serving to make the interior flexible: the book shelves should be arranged along the walls if possible, or into rows that are not excessively long, with walking spaces in between. A part of the book cases, especially those occupying the centre of the space, should be wheeled and fitted with brakes. The type, material and height of the shelves should be adapted to the age of users and the type of stored materials. A well thought out and complete system identifying elements of the collection, compatible with the branding system of the entire institution of the Krakow Library, should be an integral element of the book cases. The system of classification and branding should be easy to modify and expand. Furthermore, the respondents voiced numerous comments concerning the structure of the book cases themselves.

The respondents paid particular attention to the place where new items are made available, which should be expressively illuminated and make it possible to show the front covers of books.

Many librarians highlighted the significance of the book cart, which plays not only a transport role, but is also treated by the users as the place where new elements of the collection are shown – it is there that the most sought-after titles can be found. According to librarians, a functional, eye-catching and beautiful cart with a logo placed on it could be a common element for all the branches of the Krakow Library.

3.5. *The children's and young adults section*

The majority of libraries had a section for children or a corner that was delineated for their use. These solutions were not featured in eight branches. Due to the specifics of working with this group of users, the respondents highlighted the great significance of the flexibility of the interior – the furnishing of the children's area should enable quick changes in arrangement, the organisation of workshops, games, etc. It was also reported as desired to situate the children's area in such a manner that guardians can keep an eye on the children, while being able to simultaneously use the part of the collection that interests them, e.g. the newspapers or magazines section.

According to the respondents, elements that could work well in the children's area include a wall covered in chalkboard paint, as well as an exhibition system adapted to the needs of this group of users (installed at an appropriate height, making it possible to quickly and easily assemble an exhibition). The arrangement and furnishings should also make it possible to display films.

A young adults section operated in only one branch at the time of the survey. According to the respondents, the furnishing of the young adult's section should take into account both individual work (e.g. doing homework), as well as group activity (preparation for classes, spending free time with a group of friends). The furniture should be mobile and make changing the arrangement of the interior possible. The placement of this section (separation from the quiet sections of the library) and the employed finishing materials should provide high acoustic comfort both within the section and outside of it. According to the respondents, materials in this section should, similarly to the new items section, be exhibited with the fronts of their covers visible.

3.6. *Computer workstations*

The whole-day observations of the activity within the library branches that had been performed by the MIK team carrying out the project indicated that users did not use the available computer workstations with much intensity. The use of a computer occurred during slightly over a third of all visits, while rental – during over 98% of visits.

The most important postulate voiced by the respondents that was associated with the use of computer workstations, was, apart from meeting the requirements of ergonomics, ensuring the privacy of users during computer use. According to the respondents it is desirable to arrange computer workstations on the edges of circulation paths and the main spaces of the library. The workstations should be separated from each other by screens. The possibility of working using one's own computer should be made possible in the entire library. To this end the entirety of a branch should be covered by wireless Internet coverage; it should also feature power outlets to plug in devices brought by users.

3.7. *Seating*

During this part of the workshop, the respondents primarily highlighted practical aspects: seating furniture should be durable, easy to clean, washable, non-upholstered or with upholstery in dark colours. The respondents agreed with the moderator's suggestion that there should be different types of furniture available (chairs, armchairs, etc.) and laid out in various configurations (individual, in small groups, tables for several persons, etc.). There should be a table or a coffee-type table for the placing of books and the personal belongings of users. The furniture should be light and be easy to move, by the users themselves as well. The chairs should be stackable. Places for sitting on for a short period of time should be arranged in the vicinity of book cases.

3.8. *Staff and hygienic facilities, storage*

The section inaccessible to the users should include a toilet for library personnel, a staff room, book storage, equipment storage, a utility room and a collection documentation room. The entrance to the section inaccessible to the users should have access restriction and be placed in an area that is visible from the library counter. Furthermore, the branches should have a separate toilet for the users of the library, including a toilet adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities.

4. **The results of the workshop in light of guidelines for the shaping of libraries and good practices**

The workshop has proven that understanding the importance of a library branch's location that is both comfortable to users and has a high visibility was widespread among its participants. The expectations of librarians were in line with the guidelines of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in this regard [6]. Contemporary built projects of outstanding new public libraries (e.g. public libraries that operate as a part of a train station in the cities of Rumia and Sopot in Poland) are also proof of this [4]. Referring to the specifics of the network of public libraries in Krakow: a distributed network of numerous, primarily small or medium-sized branches, many of the participants of the workshop expressed concern associated with the expected closure of some branches, particularly the smaller ones, which will worsen user access to libraries. Due to economic reasons, as well as in order to improve the attractiveness of small libraries, the IFLA allows their functioning in buildings shared with community centres, museums, arts galleries and sports centres [6].

The level of the adaptation of libraries in Krakow to the needs of persons with disabilities and other special needs groups was low. National construction regulations define only the requirement of the physical accessibility of new buildings to persons with disabilities, yet even those branches that had renovation work performed on them in recent years were poorly adapted to contemporary civilisational requirements. The principles of universal design, which in Poland do not have the status of current law, address the needs of various groups of users more comprehensively⁴. The IFLA guidelines in terms of taking into account the needs of the group of users with special needs refer to many aspects of a library's operation, associated not only with the architecture of its building, but also its furnishing and occupancy.

Public libraries in Krakow are absent from the urban iconosphere [7], they also do not effectively use marketing communication tools [8]. These tools, in reference to the architecture of a building make it possible for a library to engage in dialogue with its surroundings, its partners and users [9], both through the use of a comprehensive branding strategy, as well as through the use of the attributes of a building's architecture, such as large storefront-type windows or an expressive architectural form.

The respondents mostly supported practical and neutral solutions in terms floor and wall finishes. The statements of the librarians did not include postulates for characteristic, expressive interiors, described in literature as *oomph* or *wow* [10]. It should be noted that renovation work (of varying scope), was performed in over two thirds of the library branches in Krakow over the past 5 years. However, comprehensive interior redevelopment projects, including changes in interior arrangement, furniture design, interior design and branding, developed by professionals (interior designers), were few in number.

During the part of the workshop concerning the librarian's counter, statements on the subject of the ergonomics of the furniture element and workstation were dominant. The respondents' attachment to this furniture element and this mode of work, in addition to associating the library with the piece of furniture itself dominated the statements. This can be a sign of the respondents' unfamiliarity, a lack of understanding of or acceptance for the performing of new tasks that innovative public libraries undertake or an unfamiliarity with positive examples of such libraries and the functional and spatial solutions

⁴ Universal design means producing an environment that is accessible, understandable and can be used to the greatest possible degree, individually, in a natural manner and in different situations, without the need for changes, adaptations, assistance, by people of various ages, body types, as well as physical, psychological and sensory capabilities.

employed in them. In such libraries, due to the performance of new tasks and the decrease of the share of rentals in the overall number of visits, librarians spend more time away from the counter than before.

Returns and rentals can, either mandatorily or optionally, be performed by the users themselves using self-service terminals. Freeing up qualified and competent employees from performing mechanical tasks makes it possible to involve them in efforts that are strategically important to the development of the institution. In innovative libraries the work of a librarian is varied and dynamic, perhaps similar to the work of constantly moving sales advisors in large chain bookstores. These changes can mean a decrease of the significance of the counter as the most important spot within the library and a departure from official-type layouts (a sitting librarian and sitting or standing users) in favour of more open and loose configurations (encountered, for instance, in retail) and the performing of some tasks in an *ad hoc* manner at movable or even mobile terminals.

The recommendations of the workshop's participants considering book cases and the storage of collections expressed a desire for the storing of a large collection of books, but also striving to arrange them in such a manner that would make it possible to store them without eliciting a feeling of the interior of a branch being cluttered. Hence, the researchers carrying out the project judged two thirds of the library branches in Krakow either negatively or neutrally in terms of the interior being cluttered with a part of the collection. We can observe in the practice of innovative libraries a tendency to reduce the size of the collection in favour of increasing floor area that can be used in a flexible manner to perform tasks that were not previously carried out within libraries, as well as towards achieving a feeling of spaciousness. Elements of the collection that are used less frequently can be relocated to a separate central storage unit or to other branches, from where they can be made available on demand at any branch, or are relocated to the part of the branch's storage section that is inaccessible to users (if such a storage space exists). In innovative libraries the free up space is sometimes occupied by, among other things, sections for young adults (with gaming consoles, spaces of expression), rooms for either quiet or loud group work. The opinions of questioned librarians on the subject of the mobility of book cases and the manner of the presentation of new items were in accordance with the practice of leading libraries. An attractive book cart where users can search for new items and other sought-after books is an interesting postulate by the respondents. According to the respondents, it should be a carefully designed piece of furniture, distinct of the Krakow Library, eye-catching and functional, featuring the logo of the institution.

The postulates of the respondents concerning the children's area were in line with current practice in leading libraries. In many of these libraries the areas for children are designed and arranged in the immediate vicinity of areas that are attractive to their guardians (near the newspapers and magazines section, near the coffee bar). Apart from one branch, the libraries in Krakow did not have young adult's sections. IFLA guidelines [6] point to the different needs of this age group in comparison to children and adults, both in terms of the collections (comics, films, television series, music, posters), services (consoles, board games), as well as spaces (a separate space with an expressive, contemporary character).

The expectations of the respondents associated with computer workstations in the library were in accordance with ergonomics and good practices of leading institutions. Despite the fact that libraries help and should still help prevent digital marginalisation, the share of computer users was relatively low, regardless of whether the devices and software were highly regarded by the researchers carrying out the project. The experiences of foreign libraries which provide good conditions for residing in them for longer periods of time indicate that users often use their own computers and in the case of a part of the visitors the only resource of the library that is used is its physical space. Due to the miniaturisation of computers and the increasing capabilities of smartphones, we can assume that the use of desktop computers in libraries will decrease. Workstations with specialist software, e.g. for sound or image editing can prove to be popular.

The vast majority of library visits in Krakow is short, with the visitors rarely taking a seat during them. Libraries mostly fulfil the role of a book rental. We can assume that it is for this reason that interest in seating among the workshop's participants was limited mostly to such matters like the ease of keeping

them clean and their durability. The IFLA recommends that each age group should be provided with various types of seating – both for reading and relaxation, for individual learning and for work in groups and pairs; spaces for quiet work should also be provided. The seating variation recommended by the IFLA reflects the different forms in which libraries are used by their users. A review of good practices employed in leading libraries led to the conclusion that seating variation takes on the form of not only original furniture (including bean bags, rotating and rocking chairs, sofas or even recliners) but also different arrangements (chairs facing the view outside a window, sofas and armchairs facing each other, tables for individual work and large common tables, etc.).

The respondents voiced numerous postulates concerning the section inaccessible to users and the social and hygienic facilities, highlighting that many branches did not provide librarians with acceptable working conditions and users with the basic comfort of using a library. The expectations of the respondents in regard to these matters were compliant with contemporary standards and civilisational requirements.

5. Conclusions

The performing of new tasks associated with the functioning of libraries as meeting spaces requires appropriately arranged spaces. Current municipal public libraries in Krakow do not have appropriately arranged spaces, nor are they prepared for longer stays by users. Libraries are not seen by Krakow's residents as multifunctional places for spending time in. The vast majority of library visits is very short and includes solely the rental of books. If libraries are to become places of intense public life, then current arrangements should be supplemented or transformed into spaces that can be flexibly used for cultural and social events, meetings with cultural figures, but also for meetings of groups of friends, as well as individual or group entertainment.

The expectations and opinions of librarians who had taken part in the workshop expressed the desire to improve the recognisability of libraries within the space of the city, improve the spatial and utility standards, as well as the aesthetics of the libraries.

The question considering whether the change in infrastructure, if one is to take place, will be accompanied by a change in the habits of librarians and users and whether the library will, in fact, as Umberto Eco outlined it in 1981, become a *machine for spending free time*, remains open.

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