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REFEREED ARTICLE
City councillors and the mission of public libraries

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Abstract

Purpose – In Quebec, where a large majority of public libraries are municipal departments, the mission of the libraries must be defined in collaboration with city councillors and acknowledged by them. The purpose of this paper is to understand the views of city councillors in Quebec on the mission of public libraries, and to compare them to actual library practices.

Design/methodology/approach – The research strategy adopted is a multiple case study. Interviews were conducted with 12 city councillors who represent their library on the city council. These interviews and the municipal cultural policies were subjected to a discourse analysis. The interviews with the directors of the public libraries and some documents were subjected to content analysis.

Findings – A conceptual framework based on the theory of social construction of reality is proposed to study the discourses of city councillors in their textual dimension, to contextualise them and to analyse them in comparison with library practices.

Originality/value – There is no homogeneous view among city councillors in Quebec on the mission of public libraries. However, a model of the discourse of city councillors does emerge. It is less developed than current literature. It presents a passive image of the library in which the tradition continues, ignoring the Information Society. The analysis also revealed that the views of city councillors are based on their own convictions as individuals, on their role in the management of the municipality as elected officials, and on the image they have of the users of public libraries.

Keywords Public libraries, Canada, Stakeholder analysis

Paper type Case study

Introduction

For years, we have been hearing about the new roles of public libraries in the Information Society. Some authors argue that, because of the availability of information, public libraries must develop new roles (Brophy, 2001; Harris *et al.*, 1998; Rubin, 2004), but they do not define what these new roles are supposed to be. At the same time, some authors fear a shift away from the traditional mission of the public library in the education of citizens (Alstad and Curry, 2003; Buschman, 2003; Crowley, 2005; McCabe, 2001). The two perspectives share a common goal however: it is time to (re)define the mission of public libraries. Research in this field is sparse even if we read that "to ensure its future, the library should identify what makes it unique and make a virtue of that necessary uniqueness" (Scrogham, 2006).

Practically, when a librarian in Quebec tries to define the mission of his library, he faces a problem: there is no law that frames public libraries. So, his first option is to look to the international texts, such as the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (UNESCO, 1994) and the IFLA Guidelines (2001). However, these texts do not define the

mission of public libraries in detail. They are concerned with a wide variety of contexts worldwide and remain deliberately general, in order to be adaptable to the situation in each state. The UNESCO Manifesto presents fields of activity: education, culture, information and literacy. In the latest version (UNESCO, 1994), the entertainment mission of public libraries has disappeared. The IFLA Guidelines use the word "roles" instead of "mission", and mix up fields of activity, such as culture, with target audiences, such as children and teens (IFLA, 2001). The second option for the librarian who tries to explore the mission of public libraries is to consider the professional texts, such as the documents published by the American Library Association (ALA) or by the Association pour l'Avancement des Sciences et des Techniques de la Documentation (ASTED) situated in Quebec. ALA published in 1987 the famous "Planning and role setting", directed by John McClure (McClure, 1987). Its main idea is to define eight roles that can be fulfilled by public libraries. ALA disagrees with the necessity of a law defining the mission of public libraries. ALA is in favour of giving the choice to librarians. In practice, librarians have to choose which of these eight roles they can pursue in the community they serve. ASTED (1996) regrets the absence of a law framing public libraries and proposes some guidance, but does not define in detail the mission of public libraries. It is, therefore, clear that the official texts dealing with the mission of public libraries are plural and ambiguous (Bouthillier, 1996). However, when the organizational mission is ambiguous, professionals are stressed and unstable (March and Olsen, 1976) as the mission could be interpreted from multiple perspectives (Bouthillier, 1996). This ambiguity can be dangerous in the case of municipal libraries, where city councillors hold the power of decision on resources, and also on the existence of the library and its mission. Thus professionals need to be aware of the city councillors' views to affirm the legitimacy of the public library in the Information Society (Usherwood, 1994). Despite the recommendations of Webb (1988), the city councillors have received little attention in the literature. IFLA investigated the field recently with a multinational survey on the perception of policy-makers (Audunson, 2005; Public Library Vlissingen, 2003; Smith, 2004; Usherwood, 2003).

This article sums up the author's doctoral research (Gazo, 2009). It describes in a multiple case study the mission of public libraries as perceived by city councillors in Quebec. Two concepts have to be defined. Believing that the language plays a role in the social construction of reality, Hardy *et al.* (2000, p. 1231) define the discourse as "a set of texts [...] which bring an object into being". This study follows the definition of these authors: the discourses of city councillors mean the views of the respondents as expressed and constructed in their texts. These texts, as in Potter and Wetherell's book (1987), design the transcripts of the interviews and the written records, here the municipal cultural policies. The objectives of the study are:

- to characterize the discourse of city councillors on the mission of public libraries;
- to understand the incidence of this discourse on the meaning of the mission; and
- to compare it with the actual practices of public libraries.

A survey of the literature is conducted. In the methodology then detailed, a discourse analysis of 12 city councillors' texts is proposed. No generalisation is possible in such a descriptive study and limitations are exposed. The data collected are analysed and discussed. Some conclusions are reached and the potential for further studies is noted.

Literature review

Most studies confuse the concepts of mission, role, purpose, etc. In order to understand what a mission is Campbell (1989) proposed a framework composed of strategies, behaviours, values and purposes. It is not intended to study the strategies or the attitudes in public libraries in this paper but to use the concepts of values and purposes from Campbell's model. The mission of public libraries is thus comprised of the values defended by public libraries and the purposes of public libraries, which are themselves composed of the fields of activity public libraries investigate, the roles they play, and the public they try to reach.

Values

Several values are consensual: democracy, intellectual freedom, privacy, stewardship, quality of service, literacy and reading, and aesthetic values are largely accepted (ALA, 2004; Finks, 1989; Gorman, 2000, 2001; Rubin, 2004; UNESCO, 1994). Others are challenged in the literature by post-modernist authors who question equality versus equity of access. They reject rationalism and Truth (Radford, 1992, 1998). Dole *et al.* (2000) have demonstrated that public librarians attach great value to intellectual freedom, equality of access and quality of service. In Smith's thesis (2008), the priorities of public librarians are equality of access and quality of service.

Fields of activity

The UNESCO Manifesto lists information, culture, education and literacy as fields of activity for public libraries. The concept of information is large, to begin with. Buckland (1991) identified three main definitions:

(1) information as thing;

(2) information as knowledge; and

(3) information as process.

Despite the differences, these three definitions are concerned with the mission to transfer information corresponding to the needs of the users. Second, the concept of culture is ambiguous. Two definitions can be distinguished (Dollot, 1996; Jenks, 2005): one is anthropological (culture as the characteristics of a civilization) and the other is intellectual (culture as general knowledge in Sciences, Arts and Literature). This means a double mission for public libraries: to preserve, disseminate and participate in the development of the local culture, and to preserve and disseminate the "classics" in the different disciplines of knowledge. Third, education can have two different objectives: according to Plato, education consists of teaching the Truth, transferring knowledge (Egan, 1992; Wilson, 2003). In contrast, Rousseau considers education as giving the students learning competency and the ability to criticize knowledge (Egan, 1992). However, public libraries offer the resources, the environment and several services to pursue their educative mission. Fourth, illiteracy is largely and unfortunately widespread. In Quebec, 19 per cent of people are unable to read or to write, without help, a text (Ministère de la Culture et des Communications, 1998). The literacy mission of public libraries is essential because of their situation in the community. They are neutral in terms of educational evaluation and they have the resources to develop programs and services to fight illiteracy (Fournier and Gagnon, 2000; Zapata, 1994). Lastly, despite the abandonment of the entertainment mission in the last version of the

UNESCO Manifesto, it is added here because it is largely recognized by the public and the professionals (Hartel, 2003; Hayes and Morris, 2005). In this field of activity, public libraries offer programs for children and teens, internet access, propose bestsellers, special collections for the local history association, etc. In The Netherlands, politicians consider the main missions of public libraries to be information and culture (Public Library Vlissingen, 2003), but in Australia, Smith (2004) shows that information and entertainment are the priorities according to politicians.

Roles
McClure (1987) has defined eight roles among which public libraries can choose, depending on their community. For each of these roles, ALA proposes special services (Himmel *et al.*, 1998):

(1) community activities centres (e.g. the library could help in the integration of multiple cultural communities, offer programs of animation and a public space where ideas are freely expressed and discussed);

(2) community information centres (e.g. the library could offer information on the municipal services, local events and papers, special services for employment searchers, the business community, and could give access to e-government);

(3) formal education support centres (e.g. the library could offer a homework program and training on the search and retrieval of information);

(4) independent learning centres (e.g. the library could develop programs for lifelong learning and technological literacy training);

(5) popular materials libraries (e.g. the library could propose multiple copies of bestsellers, and offer special loan conditions);

(6) preschoolers' door to learning (e.g. the library could propose storytelling events and programs to develop the ability to read);

(7) reference libraries (e.g. the library could offer a reference service *in situ* or by mail, by Facebook, etc.); and

(8) research centres (e.g. the library could develop a special collection for researchers in its community).

Target audiences
The literature presents children, teens, elderly people, disabled people and cultural communities as main target audiences for libraries. Each of these targets has special needs in terms of collections, space, programs and material. For example, immigrants should be able to read in their mother tongue and to learn the language of their new country (IFLA, 2009).

This literature review demonstrates that the missions of public libraries are more complex than they appear initially. Yet researchers have neglected to explore this aspect. For Smith (2008, p. 39), "perhaps there is so little in-depth discussion of this topic in the literature because the library profession as a whole thinks that they agree or at least know what the answers are". Now, as Smith (2008) and Watts and Samuels (1984) have stated, experts and professionals in our field do not agree on the missions of public libraries.

Conceptual framework

The objective of constructivism is to understand how meaning is constructed and influenced by discourse and texts (Schwandt, 2000). In this perspective, reality is constructed by multiple interpretations (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Individuals have the ability to learn from their experience (Van Dijk, 1997). Therefore, the construction of meaning is retrospective (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) and embedded in its specific context (Van Dijk, 1997). In this regard, the aim of this study is to appreciate how the city councillors have constructed their understanding of the mission of public libraries; this constitutes the personal dimension of my framework. In addition, this study aims at understanding the texts of city councillors as prescribed by the descriptive approach of discourse (Potter and Wetherell, 1987); this constitutes the textual dimension of this author's framework. Also proposed is a contextual dimension in this framework as prescribed by the critical approach of discourse (Fairclough, 1992). Fairclough (1992) has categorized the effects of discourse. In a fourth dimension of this framework his category of ideational effects of discourse is used to describe the "ways in which texts signify the world and its processes, entities and relations" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 64), i.e. the ways in which the meaning of the mission of public libraries is constructed compared to the practices of public libraries.

Methodology

The multiple case study approach was the strategy of research chosen in order to analyse each case in depth to then compare the cases. Generally between six and ten cases are necessary in this type of study (Yin, 2003). In this research, 12 cases were chosen among the 116 Quebec municipalities, which have a public library. First, the cases situated more than 150km from Montreal were rejected for practical reasons. Second, the 64 remaining cases were categorized according to their density (big/medium/small size of municipalities), and their allocation to the public library (superior or equal/inferior to the provincial average). A model of six combinations was constructed using these two criteria. Two cases were selected randomly in each combination. An interview guide (see Appendix) was developed, which was tested on two cases. The data-gathering was organized in four steps. The city councillor who represents the public library at the City council was interviewed first, and the cultural policy for the last ten years was collected (three of the municipalities selected had no cultural policy). A discourse analysis was carried out to analyse these data sources in two phases. First the experience of the city councillors, the themes and metaphors they use, the interpretation and production contexts of their texts, the socio-historical and organizational contexts of their library, were analysed to understand the discourses of city councillors in their contexts. Second a grammatical analysis is necessary to reveal the use of personal pronouns, taken-for-granted presuppositions, the future, conditional and imperatives tenses as indicators of ideational effects of discourse on the missions of public libraries. Then the director of the library was interviewed. In addition, the web site of the public library was screened. A thematic analysis was carried out on these data sources also, which showed the practices of the public library. Third, the results of the discourse analysis and the thematic analysis were compared. Fourth, the city councillors were interviewed a second time to tell them about the results of their case. This second interview was not structured and the interviewees

were asked to give their impressions, to add whatever they wanted, so as to complete the analysis of data.

The limits of the study are acknowledged. The city councillors interviewed were those who represent the public library at the city council. It can be assumed that they are interested in the library and do not represent the city councillors in general. Moreover, only municipalities that have a public library were studied. However, in Quebec, there are a lot of little municipalities, isolated on the territory, which have no library but buy special services as loan of books or expositions from the regional department of library services, called Centre regional de services aux bibliothèques publiques. Distant municipalities were also rejected. In these municipalities, the city councillor would perhaps never have heard about the recent immense project of the national library of Quebec, which is an example for a lot of librarians and users. Lastly, this concerned a small sample and no generalisation can be made from the results.

Results and discussion
Personal dimension

Ten of the respondents were between 45 and 64 years old and eight have no higher education diploma. They work in various fields, with only one in the cultural domain. Because of their age and the relative novelty of public libraries in Quebec, they never went to any public library when they were young. All the respondents are not users of their public library. Like politicians in The Netherlands (Public Library Vlissingen, 2003), in Norway (Audunson, 2005) and in Australia (Smith, 2004), they unanimously say that they consider the library essential. How essential? According to city councillors, the library has to serve all the communities and to cover the entire municipal territory. Sometimes, it is the only service in outlying areas. The library is essential because there is no other choice. However, the public library is the most used cultural service in Quebec (Baillargeon, 2004). Half of the respondents said they distinguish the library of today (city councillors are particularly proud of the computers and internet access the library offers) from the traditional library (when the library only offered the loan of books). Only two of the respondents are curious about libraries in other municipalities. The majority of respondents do not care about other municipalities and only worry about what happens in their local context. This result contradicts Koepp (1967) who argued that municipal decision making relative to libraries was largely influenced by the comparison with other municipalities. So what does influence the respondents' point of view? A third of them admit they have been interested in the public library only since they represent it at the city council. It can be said that the respondents have at least in part built their understanding of the mission of their public library from the responsibilities they take on as city councillors.

Textual dimension

The categories of mission, as defined in the literature review, are discussed as follows.

- *Values*. According to the respondents, the main values defended by public libraries are the quality of service, accessibility and reading. As professionals (Dole *et al.*, 2000; Smith, 2008) and as users (Ladhari and Morales, 2008), all the respondents prioritise the quality of service. However, what does define this quality, according to the city councillors? For seven of the respondents the quality of public libraries lies in the building itself; for eight it lies also in the

collection (as the professionals in Smith, 2008; and as the users in Public Agenda, 2006) and for nine of them it lies as well in the events. According to the respondents, the professionals and the services are less important factors in the assessment of the quality of the library. As professionals (Koehler *et al.*, 2000; Smith, 2008), nine of the city councillors interviewed worry about the accessibility of the library. In their discourse, the accessibility is synonym of a free or almost free access (a third of the libraries still charge for a part of their services), and long open hours. Thus the accessibility issue lies in the physical library. Accessibility via internet is largely ignored. Like politicians in Norway (Audunson, 2005) and users (Public Agenda, 2006), seven of the respondents enjoy reading and worry about teaching basic reading skills. Three city councillors talk about the defence of the French language, which has never been mentioned in the literature. It would be interesting to study the role of public libraries in the context of the political debate on languages in Quebec. Stewardship is not a priority according to the respondents. When this value is discussed, they present arguments about the physical integrity of documents but never mention the moral respect of the works. Respect and tolerance, intellectual freedom and rationalism have been cited by only five respondents. It can now be said that the values of public libraries, as perceived by the respondents, are inferior to those put forward by professionals. However, the respondents have chosen the same main values as professionals and users.

- *Fields of activity*. In order of importance, the respondents rank first education, then culture, information, entertainment and literacy as the fields of activity of public libraries. Education is the principal concern of all the respondents, like politicians in Norway (Audunson, 2005) and Australia (Smith, 2004). The public also appreciates the educative programs offered by public libraries (Metropolitan Cooperative Library System, 1999; Public Agenda, 2006). Ten respondents recognize the double mission of public libraries in terms of culture (anthropological meaning/intellectual meaning). They use different expressions to talk about culture, so its definition remains problematic. However, it is not characteristic of the city councillors (Bissonnette, 2004). According to ten of them, the informative mission of public libraries lies in the access to information sources (physical or virtual documents). It is not the main mission according to the respondents, as opposed to the public (ALA, 2006; Metropolitan Cooperative Library System, 1999; OCLC, 2005). Professionals in Quebec regret that the city councillors consider the public library as an entertainment centre (Baillargeon, 2002). In this study, entertainment is not a primary mission of public libraries, according to nine of the respondents. In their opinion, entertainment lies in the collections. However, 40 per cent of users go to the public library for entertainment activities in an American survey (ALA, 2006). Literacy is theoretically important for six of the respondents, but several argue that their municipality is not concerned with illiteracy. In comparison, Norway's politicians prioritise the literacy mission of public libraries (Audunson, 2005). To sum up, it can be said that mission of the public libraries in the respondents' discourses remains an educative and cultural mission.

- *Roles*. By order of importance, the respondents rank first education, then socialization, information search, literacy, entertainment, teaching of basic

reading skills, social peace and research as the roles of public libraries. Education is definitely the priority according to all the respondents. In their view, it is sufficient that public libraries offer collections for young people. No special service or training is needed, according to the respondents. Community activities are particularly appreciated by 11 of the city councillors interviewed and by the public in general (Public Agenda, 2006). The respondents insist on the impact of such activities on library use. They see the library as a meeting place, where people can communicate with each other. The respondents share this idea of socialization with politicians from Norway (Audunson, 2005), Australia (Smith, 2004), and more generally with the public (Ladhari and Morales, 2008; Public Agenda, 2006). Thus according to the respondents, the library is a place of communication. Lawson (2004) calls this a "third place", between home and the work place. However, the library is not a place where ideas are discussed and debated; it is not a civic place, as defined by Habermas (1992). Reference services are appreciated by users (ALA, 2006; Metropolitan Cooperative Library System, 1999; OCLC, 2005). However, in this sample, only one library offers a reference service. So 11 respondents out of the 12 interviewed do not know what a reference service is. When explained, they doubted that such a service would be useful. According to them, information is in the documents on the shelves or on the internet, so why pay a librarian to help the users in their search for information? In the same vein, the respondents say that they are aware of literacy, teaching basic reading skills, etc., but that the collections are enough to satisfy users. There is no need to develop special services for lifelong learning, entertainment or for the integration of cultural communities. The collections are already there. It can now be said that the respondents do not consider the public library as a service with roles to fulfil, but as a place where collections rest on shelves and are sufficient to satisfy the users' needs.

- *Target audiences*. All the respondents prioritise the youth and the elderly. In their view, babies, children and teens are taken together. Similarly disabled people are merged with the elderly. So the target audiences are two large entities without distinctions. Apart from the youth, no target audiences, such as immigrants, need special collections.

Contextual dimension
The history of the libraries in this sample testifies to the novelty of public libraries in Quebec. When the municipal fusions took place, larger municipalities constituted a network of libraries. Moreover, the municipal charts show that libraries are under the responsibility of a department called Service of Entertainment, or Service for Community, so it is difficult to place the libraries on the political agenda (Delorme, 2000). Ten libraries of the twelve in the sample have or have had a construction/extension project. It can now be said that the library as a building is important for city councillors. It must be noted that the municipal allocations are very dissimilar but generally moderate (Lajeunesse, 2005; Savard, 2004). This study also confirms that public libraries are poorly staffed in terms of professional librarians (Savard, 2004). It can, therefore, be said that the library as a building is important according to the respondents, more than for the professional staff.

Effects dimension

In interviews, the respondents answer with "I think", "according to me". However, the analysis shows that the "I" does not mean the same thing in all sentences. Sometimes, it means "me, as a city councillor". This is called the city councillor voice. Sometimes, it means "me, as an individual, my deep values are". This is called the personal voice. Furthermore, sometimes, the respondent answers as a user. This is called the user voice. It can now be said that the respondents built their point of view on these three personalities; city councillors give a triple-voice discourse.

The respondents do not use verbs to describe the roles of public libraries, but nouns (e.g. they talk about "user training"; they never say "librarians train users"). Nouns erase the action and focus on the result, so we get the impression that nobody is acting. The library has, the library is, but it seems that librarians are doing nothing. The respondents never talk about the library as a service, only as a place. Moreover, none of the respondents are aware of what the library really does, and five blame their library for its lack of visibility. According to Baillargeon (2005), this invisibility lies in the famous quietness of librarians. City councillors do not use the future or conditional tenses when asked to imagine the ideal library. Seven are persuaded that they already have it. In fact, they do not know another library and they seem unable to imagine another model of library. Their vision perhaps lacks depth because of their limited time as city councillors, but the results show that seven are satisfied with their library, particularly by its use: they do not question the library (they never use interrogative sentences); they do not present any requirement (they never use imperative tenses or performative verbs such as "must"). However, they are proud of the building, the collections and the material (e.g. the internet access). Their satisfaction has a halo effect: these seven respondents are unable to criticize their library and, in so doing, to think of what could be done to improve the services. It can now be said that the majority of the respondents are proud of what they give to the library, what can be counted, what is visible. That is what satisfies them.

Yet there are some contradictions between the respondents' discourses and the reality of libraries. The main contradiction lies in the activities organized by the library. All the city councillors cite the storytelling and the visits by school classes. Thankfully, libraries offer a multitude of other activities for each target audience, inside and outside the walls of the library. The respondents have not heard about these activities. A second contradiction lies in the informative mission. Three librarians are asking for more professionals to offer a reference service, but, as already noted, 11 of the respondents doubt the utility of such a service because they think their library has the information in its documents. Moreover, they do not acknowledge the specific skills and competences of librarians. Like the public, they mix up all the employees under the same word: librarians. They do not understand what the tasks are, etc. There is also a contradiction in the fact that ten city councillors advocate the financial accessibility of libraries while three continue to set a fee for the use of the library. It seems that accessibility is an important value, under the condition that it bears no cost for the municipality. It can now be stated that the respondents' knowledge relative to the library is limited. It is no surprise of course, but the study shows what elements the library has to highlight to persuade the city councillors.

Conclusion

The literature review shows the complexity and the richness of the missions of public libraries. The study presents the point of view of city councillors who have been largely ignored until now. The conceptualisation of the triple-voice discourse is an innovation that can be reused in other contexts. The contexts of the cases studied allow us to hope that libraries are, little by little, starting to be seen as cultural services and not as entertainment services, comparable to the arena. Methodologically, an analysis model is proposed for studying the themes in the discourses, but also their context, their effects and their contradictions. This model can be reused. Discourse analysis is still largely ignored in librarianship and information science. It is hoped that the usefulness of this method has been demonstrated. From the professional point of view, four conclusions are proposed in this study. First, city councillors built their understanding of the mission of public libraries on their experience as individuals, as users (real or imagined) and as politicians. It is, therefore, advised for librarians to use these three ways to persuade the city councillors. Second, the diversity of users is unknown. Third, city councillors have a passive image of the library, which offers a place and a collection and where staff are invisible. Fourth, city councillors consider that the traditional mission of public libraries remains the same and ignore the impact of Information Society. It is, therefore, advised that librarians highlight the diversity of users, as well as the informative mission and the action of all employees in order to broaden the image the library held by city councillors.

Based on the results of this study, new areas of research can be proposed: the sample should be extended to every public library and service present in the small municipalities of the Province of Quebec. As is a standard practise in political studies, the results should be differentiated according to the gender of the respondent. A deeper analysis of values of city councillors is also needed. As proposed by the respondents, the role of public libraries in the political language debate in Quebec should get more attention. It is also proposed to differentiate between the city councillors whose library is a municipal department, and those whose public library is managed by a board of trustees. Municipal fusions and de-fusions have had an ongoing impact on public libraries, a subject which has been as of yet by researchers. This author thinks it would be interesting to understand what happened during these last few years in this context. It is necessary also to understand how the decision making relative to the library is managed by the municipal council. Future studies should also try to understand how librarians and city councillors communicate with each other. Given the unrecognised value of librarians, it would also be interesting to study how librarians are hired in a municipal context: who chooses them and what criteria are used to evaluate them. City councillors hold the power of decision on public libraries in Quebec. The understanding, the possibilities and the actions of these decisive libraries' stakeholders should be explored. The aim is to understand how they use and could use their power if we want to persuade them to promote and improve the library services and resources (the material, the collections, the allocations and last, but not least, the staff).

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Appendix. Interview questions

(1) You know that I am interested in your point of view on the mission of public libraries. To begin, I would like you to tell me about your personal experience with public libraries.

(2) As a city councillor, what is your experience with the public library?

(3) Has your view of the public library changed since your election? Why?

(4) At this point I would like you to tell me what is a public library for you?

(5) What is the *raison d'être* of a public library; i.e. Why a public library in your municipality?

(6) What place does the public library occupy in your municipality?

(7) What fields of activity does the public library have to investigate?

- Is there a mission of the public library connected with new technologies such as the internet?
- Is there a literacy mission of the public library?
- Is there an education mission of the public library?
- What is the difference between the public library and the school library?
- Is there a cultural mission of the public library?
- Is there an informative mission of the public library?

(8) What audiences must the public library attempt to reach?

(9) What roles does the public library have to fulfil?

- What is the role of the public library for new immigrants?
- What is the role of the public library for elderly people?
- What is the role of the public library for teens?
- What is the role of the public library for children?
- What is the role of the public library for people who cannot come to the library?
- What is the role of the public library for disabled people?

(10) What values does the public library have to defend?

(11) Are these values negotiable according to you?

(12) What are you expecting of the public library in terms of its mission?

(13) Finally, what would an ideal public library be like?

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