

"Future Library Unconference 2013" Athens, 9-10 december 2013

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During the period from the 9th to the 10th of December 2013 the „Future Library Unconference 2013“ was held in Athens. This kind of (un) conference was organized by the *Future Library Organization*, and the host was The Benaki Museum.

The Future Library is a non-profit organization, it was established in Veria in 2011. It spun out of the Veria Central Public Library, recipient of the 2010 *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant*. The Stavros Niarchos Foundation is Future Library's exclusive donor. The Foundation's grant aims at developing a sustainable network of public and municipal libraries across Greece, which will further be linked to the National Library of Greece. The ultimate goal of this development is to reinforce the significance of libraries, as knowledge, creativity, and interaction-promoting institution in people's minds.

After the first announcement of the (un) conference, the possibility of getting a grant for participation was sent by e-mail from IFLA, then via mailing list of the Serbian Library Association. On the website of Future Library unconference instructions on how and in what way it was possible to get a grant could be found. There was the possibility to apply for two grants: *Bill&Melinda Gates Foundation* and *Europeana Awariness Public Libraries Network*. Thirty participants received a grant by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and approximately thirty came through the project *Europeana Awariness Public Libraries Network*. Besides the participants from Greece, the Balkans and the rest of Europe and other continents at the meeting, ten participants from Serbia also attended: Jasmina Ninkov, the director of the Belgrade

City Library; Predrag Đukić, assistant director of the Belgrade City Library; Milena Rodić, director of the National library „Vuk Karadžić“ in Veliko Gradište; Aleksandar Jokanović from the City Library of Novi Sad; Jelena Rajić from the City Library „Radislav Nikčević“ from Jagodina; Bogdan Trifunović, assistant director of City library „Vladislav Petković Dis“ in Čačak; Željko Dimitrijević from the American Corner in Belgrade; Daniela Skoković from the National Library of Požega; Dragan Ristić from the Library of Šabac and Olivera Nastić form the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade. The colleagues Bogdan Trifunović and Jelena Rajić had presentations on the (un)conference. Three colleagues received the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant: Jelena Rajić, Željko Dimitrijević and Olivera Nastić, and the others (except Jasmina Ninkov and Predrag Đukic who went through their project related to Europeana) have received a grant of Europeana Awariness Public Libraries Network.

This (un)conference is the second one in row. The first (un)conference was held in 2011 in Thessaloniki, and it was intended only for public libraries in Greece while this second one was spread to other countries.

The Future Library team consists of five people: Dimitris Protopsaltou, Despina Gerasimidou, Lida Mantzourani, Eva Anagnostou and Stella Chatzopoulou, who, together with thirty volunteers, organized this conference. The conference was divided into sixteen sessions and workshops: 3D printing, Advocacy, Balkan stage, Design, Design Thinking, E-books, Gaming, Gen-Y, Green City, Innovation, Memory, Robotics, Roundtable: e-books, Roundtable: Strategy and Web

Archiving.

There were 55 speakers from 26 countries. The lecturers were eminent librarians, architects, information scientists, designers who are also the directors in their institutions. They presented their institutions and projects which were implemented thanks to various foreign donations. Two round tables were also held: the theme of the first one was e-books in public libraries. A psychologist, a journalist, a writer, librarians and a representative of Google took part in the discussion. And the theme of the second round table was the strategy of knowledge and public spaces. The participants were: Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law and journalist of TO VHMA, the mayors of Athens and Kallithea, director of the Stavros Foundation Ioannis Trohopoulos, chairman of the Board of the National Library of Greece, artistic director of the Greek National Opera and representatives of TEDEX in Athens.

On the first day, before the start of the conference, the organizers took us on a tour of the city library district Iliopuli and the renovated Media lab. After that, they took us to the Visitor Center of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre. The future center will occupy 17,000 square meters. It is intended to accommodate the Opera, the National Library and the Cultural Centre in one place. The idea is that these spaces are available to all stakeholder citizens, that this is not just one more elitist place, which is what the president of the Stavros Foundation, Ioannis Trohopoulos, presented at the second roundtable.

Both days of the conference were interesting, but they were a little strenuous because the lectures were held one after another throughout both days. The presentations were mostly in the form of Power Point. The lecturers were mainly abided by the timetable. It has been shown that very important things can be displayed in an informal, interesting way. After each session, there was a mini concert or performance, because around 400 participants attended the conference and they needed to be kept entertained.

Based on lectures, it could be seen that there was a lot invested in the culture of Greece, but mainly funded by private foundations, not the state. These foundations realized the significance and importance of books and libraries, the

importance of the internet and how important direct contact between colleagues and experts is.

The lectures were interesting and useful. An interesting lecture to me was the lecture by Francine Houben, the founder and creative director of the Danish architectural firm Mecano, who designed a public library in Birmingham, the largest public library in Europe.

An interesting presentation was also given by Stewart Parsons, director of Community Interest Company „Get It Loud in Libraries,,, who brings singers, artists and performers into his public library. He talked about what a library can provide us with in the digital era, performances etc.

Jakob Guillois Lærkes, director of Gladsaxe Libraries in Denmark, as part of his lecture "Building libraries for tomorrow,,, spoke on how significant it is to have a modern library building, what are the advantages, which are the new trends, what is the role of libraries in the future and how important physical workspace is.

Rasha Hussein Tawfik, director of Department at ESCD, Egypt's Society for Culture and Development, presented the successful model for learning that can be applied to public libraries, the project involving development programs for children and youth. She is at the forefront of the organization „IT clubs,,, through which she contributes to spreading information technology in public libraries in Egypt.

The hosts made an effort and the organization of the conference was impeccable, the timetable was honored and the conditions were excellent. At the end of the conference, the general impression was that the goal of the organizers was achieved, that participants were creative, and managed to connect and inspire their society. We heard some new ideas and proposals that we hope we will be able to realize some time soon. The organizers have announced the next conference in 2015, they did not specify exactly when and where, but it is assumed that it will be in the new Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre, whose opening is envisaged that year.