



The Infinite Library

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This document is an executive summary of “The Infinite Library” report drawn up by Dosdoce.com for the Basque Government department of Education, Linguistic Policy and Culture.

The aim was to analyse the focus, the structures of the contents and services, as well as the management models for the world’s main libraries, in order to determine how to enrich the eLiburutegia platform.

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Introduction

This report analyses the world's main digital library lending platforms as well as the types of licensing models that are being used worldwide.

Key aspects and success factors have been identified in order to help public library professionals determine which aspects they should take into account when setting up a digital lending project. It also includes examples of new uses of physical spaces in libraries and the most relevant trends at a time when technology is fully integrated in our daily life.

The main key aspects of success for digital lending platforms that were identified in the research are:

- 1. Wide-ranging ebook catalogue.** A wide range of ebooks is key in terms of encouraging library lending. Platforms with the best ratios of digital lending service use have an average of over 10,000 ebooks in their catalogues.

- 2. Training librarians.** Beyond a broad catalogue, it is really important to involve the actual librarians in the whole process: listening to them carefully, compiling their suggestions and proposals for improvement to ensure the digital lending project's success. From the start, in addition to the contents section, librarians should be trained to give them in-depth knowledge of how the platform works so that they can actively recommend it to users.
- 3. Purchasing lending licences that do not expire.** There is no single licencing model but a wide range of scenarios that should be analysed among publishers and librarians to determine the suitability of each licence according to the potential use of the ebooks purchased.
- 4. Encouraging on-screen reading.** In addition to a good catalogue and motivated librarians, libraries should make an effort to encourage on-screen reading through digital book clubs, campaigns to promote online reading via its blogs and social networks, as well as coordinating campaigns with schools, authors and publishers to encourage rotation of the purchased catalogue.

- 5. Better control of the technology.** After the initial phase of contracting commercial platforms for lending services, an increasing number of libraries are analysing the possibility of developing their own proprietary platforms for better control and flexibility of the public services they offer their users.
- 6. Beyond ebooks.** Libraries should lead the search for contents and offer their users all types of digital contents. In this respect, the most innovative public libraries are incorporating all types of contents into their catalogues: educational apps, a wide selection of self-published books, user-generated contents, out-of-copyright classics, video games, films, music, etc. as well as ebooks from the publishing sector.
- 7. Own reading app.** A new way of discovering and consuming contents in digital format that helps to investigate reading patterns among readers: highlighted paragraphs, real reading times, shared extracts, conversations on social networks, etc. to get in-depth knowledge of users that will lead to better service.
- 8. Transforming physical spaces.** Technology is growing ever-stronger and tactile screens, beacons, Augmented Reality... facilitate and enrich discovery, search and

access to contents. The place initially designed for meeting, study and reading is evolving without losing sight of its origins and it is incorporating services that could not be envisaged before: entrepreneurship, artistic creation, vocational training and employability.

- 9. Collaboration and joint-creation.** The development and maintenance of this type of services should be tackled collectively with libraries from other places or even other countries or governments, technology partners with innovative models (free code, generic licences, “revenue-share”, etc.).

On the other hand, some of the main challenges identified for libraries within the framework of developing this international research are:

- Restrictions in content access: the possibility of accessing complete or fragmented content, for a limited time or indefinitely...
- The protection systems applied to the content to prevent unauthorised distribution (DRM) compared to the absence of any protection on downloaded content or reading in the cloud (streaming).

- The different licence models for contents: permanent purchase, purchase of licences per use, access or subscription, licences with or without expiry dates, payment for actual reading or a mixture of several options.
- Lending reading supports and the fight between ownership formats or universal format.
- Internet access from supports representing permanent control over the content that has been downloaded.
- The investment in time and equipment to manage the lending service.
- Transformation of library services and contents.

We find ourselves on a new stage where libraries will become part of a new geography of knowledge and innovation. The epicentre moves towards the user and the set of tools and services that should be made available to them so that they not only consume contents but also generate and share them. And librarians will see their role transformed along with their tasks and the extent of their authority.

1. Strategic project focus: To have or not to have proprietary technology

There are two models for managing digital lending services: through **commercial platforms** specialising in providing all types of digital lending services, or by means of self-managed **proprietary platforms**. The latter have the specific feature of giving libraries greater autonomy and control of the budget, assisting decisions regarding the type of contents (ebooks, audiobooks, apps, videogames, music, etc.) or functional features that they wish to offer and the improvements that they wish to include at each point. In any case, the decision to have or not have proprietary technology has to be the result of an initial strategy that defines the project's long term vision.

1.1. Commercial platforms specialised in digital lending

Many commercial platforms offer libraries their services. Basically, libraries are purchasing the right to use technology to lend contents, predefined by the supplier and for a determined time. Normally, the platform adapts to the library's website regarding design, logos, etc.

In addition, the service includes a catalogue of items from which the library chooses what to offer to its users, and different services: galleries of changing contents that can be programmed to display new items, the most popular books or recommended reading, tactile terminals located in the libraries that give users access to the catalogue to select materials, etc.

There are digital library initiatives close to home that are built on commercial platforms such as the "Galicia Library Network" using the Xebook lending platform; the Cervantes Institute Library Network managed by Odilo; or eBiblio, digital library lending management platform previously managed by Libranda that can be accessed by the entire network of public libraries in Spain, with the exception of the Basque Country that has developed its own proprietary technology as we will see later on.

Internationally, Overdrive, 3M Cloud Library and Axis 360 stand out among others. In this model, there are examples of specialised platforms in the educational and academic sectors such as eLibro that offers content to academic, high school, public, corporate and governmental libraries, or EBL (Ebook Library), lending service for academic and governmental and corporate research libraries all over the world.

1.2. Proprietary development of platforms for digital lending

In the changing world of the Internet, direct management of technology is one of the key points to be able to define a cultural management model that does not depend on third parties, possibly not with the same focus and that might even come to agreements between regions or countries to surrender the technology as generic or jointly tackle complex developments.

Having your own technology requires greater implication but also allows progress towards what the 21st century library will become: in addition to still providing their current public services, these places will become a meeting point for joint-creation of

all types of digital contents. In this transformation context, having your own platform guarantees that libraries continue to play a relevant role in the digital era.

The general offer of lending models is highly limited and, to a large extent, imposing, often not matching a library's real needs. Consequently, some have taken the initiative to develop their own technology and establish different channels to access funds: from agreements with major distributors to incorporating their own funds. This type of initiative has aroused great interest among the library community.

The self-managed digital library offers greater possibilities of intervening in the user experience as well as in the contents and functional features being offered. Librarians can participate in selecting contents that the publishers offer them directly, and even incorporate other types of complementary contents such as apps, music, video games, etc. Having your own platform also gives you the chance to offer own contents: from your users or unknown authors who decide to self-publish their works.

Librarian participation in selecting the works that are going to be available for lending has been identified as a key success factor as they pay attention to what users are actually requesting, beyond new releases or promotions. This means going from a

catalogue based on purchasing books as a package to another based on book-by-book purchasing which is more laborious but brings libraries closer to the readers.

As examples of digital libraries developed on owned platforms, in Europe we have come across three interesting cases: eLiburutegia in the Basque Country that we will look at in detail at the end of this report, another in Grenoble (France) and lastly one in Flanders (Belgium). Another singular owned platform project has been developed in the United States by the New York Public Library, known as Library Simplified.

1.2.1 Grenoble: Bibook platform

In France, one of the most interesting initiatives comes from the Grenoble Library Network (BMG) and its Bibook platform, mainly funded by the French Ministry of Culture.

Libraries in Grenoble and other libraries came to the conclusion that the previous French project, Numilog, did not encompass a wide enough variety from this country's general publishing scene. Consequently, they wished to develop their own library lending platform where they could include content from several publishers, instead of

continually sending users outside the library's digital ecosystem to different websites from associated sellers.

The Bibook user interface is designed to integrate multiple digital book content sources (e.g. PNB, Numilog and foreign language books) within a digital library ecosystem.

The BMG is also looking into the possibility of applying another protection system that is more user-friendly than the DRM. This would involve a DRM plug-in that is being developed by the Radium Foundation.

1.2.2 Flanders: E-boeken in de Bib

Another outstanding case comes from Flanders, Belgium, and the “E-boeken in de Bib” platform (ebooks in the library). The process for planning and creating the prototype that led to developing the platform between 2010 and 2013 was supported by the Flanders government. The platform is run by Bibnet, an organisation set up by the Flanders Government in 2009 to develop the infrastructure and services in all public libraries in Flanders.

During the pilot phase, Bibnet set a fee that provides clients with an access card letting them borrow three books for a period of four weeks. There are also special services for the visually impaired.

The lending service is currently only available for members of local public libraries that are participating in the platform and it boasts a potential 30,000 users. Around 200 public libraries in Flanders have now signed up to the platform (out of a total of 300 public libraries), covering around 80% of the inhabitants of Flanders.

The ebooks can be accessed either directly from the platform website or via an app optimised for use on iOS and Android devices. The ebooks do not have an “aggressive” DRM but use watermarks (or social DRM) instead. All books available on the platform can be consulted (and 10% of content can be previewed) without any requirements for installing the reading application, registering or access credentials. The same website also gives unlimited (and free) access to all digital book items via an Internet browser within member library facilities.

Finally, one of the key reasons why Bibnet decided to host and develop its own platform is because it would give them a greater margin for controlling user experience quality plus

the capability to innovate and improve future components of digital lending services.

1.2.3 New York: Library Simplified

Library Simplified is a singular project initiated thanks to the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the New York Public Library (NYPL) joined by many libraries with a similar service vocation and open access mindset such as the Brooklyn Public Library, Boston Public Library, Sacramento Public Library, Santa Clara Public Library or the Cincinnati Public Library among others - many of them academic.

The project sprang from an initiative to counter-act the dominance of the main commercial platforms for library lending that imposed their own economic conditions and downloading processes on the library sector without considering their needs, as well as social obligations such as reader privacy. These commercial platforms require library users to enter personal data to access the ebooks they wish to read.

Faced with these requirements that go against the very nature of the library sector, the aforementioned libraries in the United States joined forces to create an alterna-

tive allowing them to provide a service for their users without having to submit to the pointless commercial demands of these platforms.

In this context, these six major libraries in the country - and others that have joined since - launched the Library Simplified platform in an attempt to make the digital lending process simpler meaning that they wished to provide a more direct and friendly way of managing selection, discovery and request processes for ebook loans in public libraries. For example, NYPL users have to follow nineteen steps to be able to read an ebook. This initiative attempts to reduce the number of clicks to three: one click to find or come across the ebook; another click to flick through it and download it and a third click to read it.

The reason behind so many steps (or clicks) to download an ebook is that each of the aforementioned commercial platforms operates in closed ecosystems that do not communicate with each other for purely commercial reasons. Instead of having a single catalogue of ebooks, the libraries divide their catalogue between the three or four commercial platforms they have contracted. Users have to enter each of them to see the ebooks that they offer. Once they have found the book they wish to read, they have to register on this platform and request the loan.

Another interesting aspect of this project is user transparency: they are simply accessing the library and they do not know which platform to look for a specific book.

Library Simplified was the first to adopt the more flexible DRM system for ebooks so that, for example, a novel or short essay might be given a shorter lending time than usual.

In this respect, Library Simplified is founded on the principles of usability, accessibility and privacy from the ReadersFirst.org movement. This initiative advocates users' need for more open, simpler access free of charge to digital books, in the same way as with printed books. They wish to encourage a single catalogue, beyond each provider's actual contents and their interests that prevent users from finding what they are after.

In the same way, they are asking for the library to manage the contents, choose and select them as well as the devices and applications that they consider appropriate. It is the library that should provide the service and manage the information for the user. And following the unanimous request made for many years, all ebooks should be compatible with all supports, independently of whether this is a Kindle, Nook, Sony, Kobo, iPad, etc.

Library Simplified promoters intend to share the focus and resources from this platform (code, reading app, DRM, resources used, etc.) with all public libraries throughout the world who are interested in implementing something similar in their country.

2. Licensing models: choosing models that fit our needs

As a counter-position to tradition loans where the library purchases ownership of the books to make them available to users, in digital lending, it purchases a licence for use, meaning a series of rights over the content determined by the type of licence.

2.1. More extensive licence models

Licence models most commonly found in the research are:

1. **Licences with a limited number of loans** that generally vary from 20 to 26. Once this limit has been reached, it is no longer available and a new licence must be purchased.
2. **Licence with expiry date:** This is a limitation to the time available for loans, nor-

mally 2 years. Once this time is up, the ebooks are no longer available and it is necessary to negotiate purchasing them again with their copyright owner.

3. **Licences with no expiry date:** in this case, the ebooks purchased this way will be available until the maximum number of loans agreed has been reached, therefore with no time limit or expiration date
4. **Non concurrent user licences:** payment per loan of a work in digital format to a user non-simultaneously. This licence is most like a traditional loan and usually involves waiting lists in the service.
5. **Concurrent user licence:** payment per loan of a work in digital format to several users simultaneously. In some cases with limitations, for example, there can be no more than ten users at the same time.
6. **Lifetime licence:** payment for the lifetime purchase of an ebook or for a long period of time (5-10 years). The ebook becomes part of the library's permanent fund and is always available for loan without requiring further payments to the publisher or copyright owner.

7. **Payment licence per loan:** the library only pays the publisher when the user asks to take out the book. The works are visible for loan without prior payment and the cost is only charged when the book is loaned.

2.2. Other emerging licensing models

Here are some examples of new methods:

- **Subscription:** Purchasing contents or services during a determined time (periods, months, years). This model has had a reasonably warm reception in the publishing sector although libraries are reticent. Nevertheless, some libraries have implemented this model.
- **Open access:** Free access to any content without requiring prior or paid subscription. This model has particularly been introduced in the academic and scientific world.

This type of licence can also determine availability on devices:

- **A single device:** when the ebook can only be read on one type of specific device (for example on a computer and not on a tablet) or determined by its location (the library computer, for example).
- **Several devices:** when the ebook can be read on several types of device: smartphones, tablets, smartTVs, computers, watches...
- **One single device at a time:** with restricted access to one device each time, although it also allows access through others (asynchronous access).
- **Several devices simultaneously** synchronously.

On the other hand, there are licences that limit access due to territorial variables or personalised parameters determined by the actual library.

2.3. Combined and collaborative models

There are examples of libraries that have come to agreements to work with publishing companies to get better economic conditions when implementing a digital lending service.

In Norway, the National Library signed an agreement with writers and publishers to digitalise over 250,000 books for free distribution. In Sweden, the Stockholm Public Library agreed with publishers and distributors to test out a dual licence model where the library covers the cost of digitalisation in exchange for the rights to free digital lending on these books for eleven years. Another collaborative practice that has been steadily growing since it first appeared is crowdfunding.

Beyond the library world, there is the pay per view concept that is a system where the consumer only pays for what they are going to consume. The equivalence of this model in the publishing sector - as in libraries - has turned into the reader paying a fee to access a specific fund or a determined catalogue for one or several publishers. There is even the method of split payment or micro-payment when the user only pays for the content they have consumed.

As a conclusion for this section, we should add that the majority of countries run several models, some with local features or with variations or additional services. As the technology moves forward and there is an increase in the number of readers that use the library lending service, new methods for loan and services are being developed.

3. Beyond ebooks: other digital contents and services

In accordance with the document drawn up by the “Strategic group to study the library’s forward planning and its information-social environment” in 2013, *The ten areas that are going to change the most in our libraries over the next few years*, there are at least five points demonstrating an in-depth transformation of the services and contents that traditional libraries will offer:

1. Libraries should reinforce their function to create communities, give them social cohesion and guarantee equal opportunities for citizens in access to information.
2. Agora libraries or libraries as a third place;
3. Library spaces will still remain as such but they will be flexible, welcoming and social;
4. Libraries will focus on education, learning and skills.

5. Services will be offered that are adapted to a digital reality;
6. Innovative strategies will be developed to manage sources and hybrid collections.

As tectonic places, libraries are being re-routed and although this is hard for them to perceive, it will transform them irreversibly:

- The appearance of the Internet has led not only to transforming supports and how we consume them and share information, but it has given everyone the chance to generate contents.
- The explosion of the digital media as a favourite way of producing, circulating and using knowledge means that traditional books are forcibly no longer at the heart of the information ecosystem;
- The traditional hierarchy between the expert and the supposed amateur is disappearing and new ways of articulating between expert and common knowledge are emerging.
- Lifelong learning is actually happening: the library is just the right place for it;

- If experts no longer hold their supposed exclusivity over producing knowledge, new ways of knowing emerge that need to be developed in more open and complex spatial contexts.
- Users not only value books as the main technology for accessing knowledge but new instruments and tools for generating shared knowledge;
- We are on a path towards a new society of qualified interpreters.

3.1 Self-publishing, games, educational contents and social labelling

In addition to digital publishing contents, there is a steady growth in user-generated content. According to a report by Bowker last year, self-published books represented 12% of total book sales in the United Kingdom and one of the world's main online bookshops states that their self-published books already represented 25% of their bestsellers. In the United States and the United Kingdom, some libraries are enriching

their platforms with self-published books and user-generated contents. In Germany, public libraries use the Biblioboard model to encourage potential authors to offer readers new contents without any intermediation other than the actual public library.

More and more libraries are providing an online loan service for video games, apps, movies, TV and audio programmes and this is usually done by contracting the services of commercial platforms that bring together this offer and provide the requested service via streaming.

- **Games:** DOK Delft in the Netherlands is probably the public library with the largest collection of video games in the world. An internal documentary made by the librarians and entitled “If you’re not gaming, you’re losing” worked to attract the attention of a large number of teenagers who were interested in video games. This attention has also been redirected towards book loans that have increased by 70%.

The Aarhus library in Denmark offers several services around games. As a complementary area, they are developing the “Families at Play in the Library” programme. The general aim is to collect knowledge on families and games and to develop

and try out models and concepts for families with children, particularly related to games and the culture of games in relation to libraries.

- **Educational contents:** the Teaching library concept aims to provide educational resources and get involved in the pedagogic dynamics of surrounding schools.

Many German public libraries have a modular offer included on the syllabus for cooperating schools and colleges. This leads to the emergence and development of what is known in Germany as the “library syllabus” (Bibliothekscurricula), focusing on teaching group needs. This brought about the idea of the “spiral syllabus” (Spiralcurriculum), also widely developed in German public libraries in cooperation with public schools. In accordance with their own precepts “public libraries and schools complement each other promoting literacy and information-based literacy in an ideal form”.

- **Social labelling:** many libraries are beginning to use systems that allow users to add labels to the contents and/or library files, browsing based on folksonomies, note-writing tools, functional features to score contents and create rankings, and reference tools.

- **Apps:** there is a whole host of applications likely to go on to form part of library collections and the materials and contents to be offered and loaned to users such as:
 - + Educational apps
 - + Story or story-telling apps
 - + Apps to promote and develop literacy
 - + Apps to promote creativity
 - + Apps to promote language learning

Public libraries such as the Mountain View Public Library in California offer their users a selection of apps, a list of directories where they are classified and scored by topic.

3.2 New services

One of the most modern libraries in the world, the Aarhus library, known as Urban Media Space, has developed a whole set of services associated with the new space. This refers to technology that makes it easier for users to display, find and locate digital contents. The library has set itself the challenge of designing a new type of space that helps to improve the learning experience. Other libraries such as the Brooklyn Public Library provide information on job offers. Others have become permanent training centres.

This is not so much a case of the library adding education-related contents or services but more that education becomes the main structuring factor for the services provided by:

- Redesigning part of their spaces to turn them into transparent work rooms.
- Providing users with the necessary machinery, instruments and tools to build models and prototypes such as laser cutters, 3D printers, sewing machines, tools, computers, printers, video cameras...

- Holding courses and workshops on specific topics.
- Constructing a coaching or project mentoring platform.
- Building a network of libraries interested in the same subject to share resources, experiences and results.
- Share the project results so that anyone can develop the same prototypes.

Once of the most frequently mentioned and internationally recognised examples is the Chattanooga Public Library.

Work spaces and meeting places are increasingly frequent. There are public libraries that purposefully set up areas to hold meetings and work discussions such as Fountaindale Public Library or public libraries such as Skokie Library where rooms can be booked for study or book club meetings and there are auditoriums to hold larger meetings.

Another programme such as “Book a Librarian” that is run at the Brooklyn Public Library assumes an active role in user training and education.

Some public libraries, such as in Fountaindale Public Library, have been fitted out to house audio and video recording studios or even television studios as in the Assen public library in the Netherlands.

The Assen public library has set up several giant tactile screens with different connections to view the catalogue and use geo-positioning applications. They also use tactile tables to display the fund and images that form part of the collections.

4. Case study: eLiburutegia, the Basque Government's Public eLending Platform

In the Basque Country, the Basque Government launched eLiburutegia on 26th November 2014, a strategic project in which it invested 340,000 Euros and will invest a further 350,000 Euros in 2015 to renew and purchase new licences. The project is a one-off project within the current department of Education, Linguistic Policy and Culture programme.

Eleven months after its launch, the platform offers more than 8.000 ebooks from all types of publishers (Basque and Spanish publishers, as well as international ones). The eLending service had been used by over 9,200 members registered serving more than 27.000 loans in the platform, generating a conversion ratio of 1.27%. This is a highly significant result compared to other libraries in the world that have been offering eLending services for longer. With 700,000 users, Sweden has a conversion rate of 1.5% since it went into operation in 2013. Looking at countries closer to home such as Italy, the MediaLibrary platform, running since 2005, has a conversion rate of 1.25%. This

percentage rises to 7.91% if we count other types of content such as journals, films, music, etc.

Through eLiburutegia, more than 570,000 Euskadi Public Reading Network users can access digital lending; in 2015 this figure will reach 700,000 as new libraries join the Network and it will offer almost 10,000 items by the end of 2015. A wide range of books is doubtlessly a key factor to promote library lending and offer good service to readers.

The United States Public Libraries have an average of 10,000 ebooks in their digital lending catalogues. The rest of Spain's Public Libraries have contracted eBiblio services, a digital library promoted by the Ministry of Culture with around 2.000 available titles. These figures put the Basque Government's platform above the state and international figures and demonstrate its firm commitment to promoting digital reading.

eLiburutegia came about from the consensus between the Euskadi Publishers Guild and the Basque Government that signed an agreement in April 2014 to support the Basque publishing sector in the digital transformation process, guaranteeing access to digital contents in Basque and promoting reading on new digital reading devices.

To support this service, the Basque Government has developed its own platform. This represents a firm commitment from the Basque Government in terms of defining and setting up its own cultural model. In the changing world of the Internet, direct management of technology is a key issue to be able to define a cultural management model that does not depend on a third party. Consequently, they decide which content and new services to offer at all times, compared to models where pre-selected lots and standardised services are imposed.

Actual librarians were involved in selecting the eLiburutegia catalogue through a committee representing the 230 libraries in the Euskadi Public Reading Network. For the launch in November, 27,000 ebooks in Spanish and Basque available from the chosen publishers were analysed one by one. In the end, 10,000 were selected: works published in Basque, over 25% new releases, 25% children and young people's literature as well as classic works and other varieties.

The service includes both ebooks protected by the Adobe DRM and free access licences. The framework agreement between the Basque Government and the Basque publishers (that can be extended to other national publishers) involves purchasing licences with a discount on the public retail price. Each licence gives the right to 20 loans and

each loan lasts for 21 days.

The librarian's role is essential in this type of service: they participate in selecting the contents and suggest improvements. In addition, representatives from the 230 libraries have taken part in training sessions looking in greater depth at technical and operating aspects. This type of training has continued throughout 2015.

In terms of access, to borrow a book in eLiburutegia, you just have to be a member of one of the 230 libraries and register at your library. At that point, you will be allowed to enter and use the entire catalogue in two modes: streaming or download.

Each user can borrow up to three books at a time. They can also ask to reserve two more books in parallel. Items on loan can be accessed for 21 days. Five days before the loan expires, the user receives a reminder by email.

The trend seen throughout the eLiburutegia set-up process involved adopting mixed models. In addition to the traditional 21 day loan licence model, other types of more innovative licences have already been considered with some publishers such as lifetime purchase or an unlimited number of users. Other alternatives will also be analysed for suitability.

In eLiburutegia, purchased licences do not expire. Once the number of loans is up, they are renewed to be able to loan the same book again.

They also deal with requests from library book clubs and, if necessary, they purchase more licences for the specific books. Another possibility involves purchasing licences for recommended reading in Basque schools,

Another relevant aspect is that libraries can contribute effectively to setting up and consolidating legal downloading and reading habits, as an alternative to unauthorised practices. They also help to stimulate the market: although some publishers feared that this service would affect their retail sales, several international studies have demonstrated that library readers also buy books regularly from book shops.

5. Conclusions

There is no single model for success, but many initiatives should be analysed to determine their suitability. Notwithstanding, Public Libraries should define their own proprietary model and not let others decide for them.

The first decision a library has to take will be about technology. There are three main options: 1) coding & owning its own platform, 2) negotiating a platform or “white label” version of a third party platform, or 3) closing a licensing agreement with one of the commercial platforms available in the marketplace (Overdrive, Baker&Taylor, 3M, etc.)

While the first option is initially more laborious, it provides librarians with more control, as well as flexibility, of their e-lending initiatives. From the USA to Europe, there is a growing worldwide trend favouring the first option. Projects such as Library Simplified, led by the New York Public Library, or the recently launched eLiburutegia, the e-lending platform by the Basque Government, as well as other similar projects in Belgium and Grenoble, France, validate this option.

The next question librarians should resolve is which license models fit their interest best. From the most standardised licensing model, which limits the number of loans per title (usually around 26 loans), to more innovative models, like the “non-expiration date licenses”, which also limit the number of loans to 26 loans per title but have no expiration date.

Most e-lending licenses also apply a time period restriction, usually 2 years. After this period, the 26 loans are cancelled even if some titles might not have consumed all the 26 loans. The new “non-expiration date licenses” allows libraries to offer the title until all 26 loans take place, even if it takes 3 or 5 years to consume all loans.

Licenses with time period restrictions require librarians to purchase ebooks in advance without knowing the real demand. In the event that the acquired titles are not requested within two years, these ebooks disappear from the platform at the end of it. Some publishers are also seeing how licenses with time period restrictions reduce the potential new renewals or new purchases of new releases, as librarians do not buy more licenses until they have consumed all loans with time period restrictions to ensure the economic sustainability of a library budget.

In any case, it is clear that libraries should lead the search and selection of contents to offer their patrons all types of works, in addition to what is traditionally purchased from publishers. In this respect, library catalogues should include a wide selection of self-published books from independent writers, audio-books, user-generated contents, copyright-free books, works in several languages, educational apps, video-games, cinema, music, etc.

Libraries should also invest in developing new ways of discovering and investigating readers' reading patterns, thorough highlighted paragraphs, real reading times, shared extracts, conversations on social networks, etc.

Having your own technology platform means independence regarding content acquisition, as well as adding services that you wish to offer. A self-managed digital library platform gives a greater degree of knowledge on user experience. It guarantees permanent access to digital archives without having to depend on a third party. However, it is advisable to develop and maintain platforms collectively along with other libraries in other places, even other countries or governments. Libraries should identify technology partners with innovative models (open code, open licences, "revenue-share", etc.) to develop sustainable platforms.

Regarding physical space in the library, a transformation is under-way in terms of the range of services whilst reading habits are also changing. Technology is acquiring a growing force and omnipresent tactile screens facilitate content discovery, search and access. The place designed for meeting, study and reading is evolving without losing sight of its origin and it is incorporating services that could not be envisaged before: entrepreneurship, artistic creation, vocational training and employability. •