



Inspiration Report

Global Library Trends

Beyond Books: Global Library Innovations
That Inspire Community-Centered Libraries
Lessons from Dokk1 (Denmark) and Oodi (Finland)

By Robyn Capone

Objective



Global Library Trends and Participatory Service

Two internationally recognized libraries, Dokkl in Denmark and Oodi Central Library in Finland, have redefined the role of public libraries through participatory service, flexible spaces, and community-centered design. Their approaches provide valuable insights for libraries looking to strengthen their community engagement while embracing the principles of the Hyperlinked Library. The work they have done can be used to inform the design of spaces and services in other libraries looking to adopt the participatory service model.

Executive Summary



There has been a global shift in public librarianship, from collection-centered institutions to participatory community centers. Dokk1 in Aarhus, Denmark and Oodi Central Library in Helsinki, Finland epitomize this shift. Success is no longer defined by circulation statistics alone. These libraries prioritize collaboration, creativity, lifelong learning, and civic engagement by offering flexible spaces, emerging technologies, and user-centered services. This report will explore how these international models align with the principles of the Hyperlinked Library and identify strategies that the Avon Public Library can use regardless of budget or building size. Through emphasizing partnerships, adaptable spaces, and meaningful community participation, Avon can continue to evolve as an innovative library that meets residents where they are while preparing for the future of public libraries.

Introduction



Public libraries have been experiencing a fundamental shift and transformation worldwide. Collections and access to information still remain central to their mission, but successful libraries increasingly serve as gathering places, learning environments, makerspaces, and civic centers. These new libraries respond to changing community needs and adapt to changing wants.

The concept of the Hyperlinked Library emphasizes that libraries should be participatory, transparent, and built around and by users. Dokkl and Oodi exemplify these ideas by designing services around community participation instead of only expanding traditional collections. Although the Avon Public Library operates on a much smaller scale, these examples demonstrate that innovation isn't just about adding new technologies, it's about expanding access regardless of size or budget.

Global Trend: The Participatory Library



Instead of viewing patrons as consumers of library services, participatory libraries invite them to become collaborators, creators, and active members of the community.

Characteristics:

- Flexible community spaces
- Technology-rich environments
- User-centered design
- Community partnerships
- Lifelong learning
- Creativity and collaboration

This philosophy closely aligns with the Hyperlinked Library model which encourages libraries to adapt to changing community expectations through transparency, participation and innovation.



Dokk 1 Aarhus, Denmark

Background:

Opened in 2015, Dokk1 was designed with extensive community input and has become a world leader and widely recognized example of participatory library planning.

Innovative Services:

- Citizens helped design the building
- Flexible furniture allows spaces to change frequently
- Family-centered children's areas
- Makerspace and creative technologies
- Public meeting rooms
- Civic services integrated into the library
- Automated materials handling for staff

Dokk1 shows that libraries can become that “third space” of a community rather than just a place to borrow books.

Oodi Central Library Helsinki, Finland

Background:

Opened in 2018, Oodi, Helsinki's Central Library, was developed as Finland's "living room". It emphasizes democracy, inclusion, and lifelong learning.

Innovative Services:

- Recording Studios
- Podcast Rooms
- Sewing Machines
- 3D Printers
- Gaming Spaces
- Public Kitchens
- Meeting Rooms
- Quiet Reading Spaces
- Extensive Digital Technology
- Community Programming

Oodi encourages patrons to create, not just simply consume.

Hyperlinked Connections



Both Dokk1 and Oodi embody the principles of the Hyperlinked Library. A theme central to this is that libraries are no longer focused primarily on collections, but looking at building relationships with their communities. As we've learned from Michael Stephens (2016), successful libraries are transparent, participatory, and centered on user needs. They continually adapt to social and technological change. Libraries must use new technologies to foster collaboration, creativity, and community engagement. Dokk1 and Oodi exemplify this by designing spaces and services that encourage active participation, rather than passive use.

Participatory service is evident in both libraries. Dokki was developed through extensive public input which allowed residents to influence everything from building design to service priorities. Similarly, Oodi was envisioned as the citizens' "living room" where patrons could actively participate in creating, collaborating, and shaping library experiences. Casey and Savastinuk's concept of Library 2.0 (2007) reinforces this approach by emphasizing that libraries should continually evolve through user feedback and community participation. Dokk1 and Oodi show that participatory librarianship goes beyond just customer service and becomes a philosophy that guides planning, programming, and culture.

Emerging technologies and infinite learning, two concepts inherent to the hyperlinked library, are evident in both libraries. Dokk1 and Oodi embody the principle that emerging technologies should support relationships rather than replace them by integrating makerspaces, studios, and labs into their designs. At these libraries technology is a catalyst for creativity and community building, rather than an attraction of its own. They also recognize the importance of learning that is continuous, self-directed, and community-based. They provide flexible spaces for patrons of all ages to develop digital literacy, creative skills, and opportunities for collaboration through workshops and learning experiences.

Dokk1 and Oodi serve as civic spaces in their communities that encourage participation, interaction, and engagement. They are truly the "third space" within the community: a welcoming, public space, separated from work and home, where people gather, build relationships, and strengthen connections.

Marie Oestergaard, Project Leader of Dokk1, said “if you build for people – people will come” (2017). Dokk1 and Oodi have reinforced the concept that successful libraries are defined by the strength of their relationships with the community they serve. If libraries focus on creating spaces and services for and with the people, the people will use, learn, and engage with the library. Dokk1 and Oodi represent this global shift toward participatory library design and community-centered librarianship. Their innovation is not in their buildings or technologies, but in their philosophy that libraries should be inclusive civic spaces where people connect, learn, create, and participate. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions’ 2022 mission stated that public libraries should promote lifelong learning, participation, equitable access to knowledge, and strengthen community bonds. These concepts are all reflected in the global library principles seen at Dokk1 and Oodi.



Shared Lessons



Theme	Dokk1	Oodi	Lesson for Avon
Community Design	Public input shaped services	Citizens influenced planning	Include community voices in future projects
Flexible Spaces	Adaptable furniture	Multi-use Rooms	Create flexible programming areas
Technology	Makerspaces	Digital Creation Labs	Expand technology as funding allows
Participation	Community events	Co-created programming	Increase opportunities for patron involvement
Lifelong Learning	Family learning	Skill development	Continue expanding educational programming

Recommendations for the Avon Public Library

Many of the ideas used in the development of Dokk1 and Oodi can be replicated in Avon on a smaller scale.

Immediate Opportunities

- Expand community partnerships
- Increase outreach programming
- Continue redesigning flexible public spaces
- Create more opportunities for community input
- Expand technology programming

Long-term Opportunities

- Community makerspace
- Outdoor programming
- Mobile library services
- Local history digitization
- Collaborative community events
- Flexible furniture

Looking Toward the Future



Community-Centered
Planning



Adaptable
Spaces



Collaborative
Programming

Dokkl and Oodi demonstrate that the future of public libraries involves participation, flexibility, and community engagement. The Avon Public Library can evolve as a welcoming, innovative, and responsive community space by adopting these concepts on a small scale. These global examples are a reminder that the most successful libraries empower people to connect, create, learn, and belong.

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