



21st century library

Adopted in April 2022

21st Century Library is a vision for the role of libraries in our society. The world around us is rapidly changing, thus the libraries need to keep pace with these changes. We might not know exactly which are the key challenges the libraries will be facing in the next decade, but we do now precisely that to survive and thrive we need to be flexible, innovative and adaptable. The current vision has been drafted by the initiative of the Estonian Librarians Association and with the support by the Estonian Ministry of Culture.

Mission

To shape society's reading habits, support life-long learning, promote environmentally sustainable mindset and provide access to information, knowledge and culture.

Vision

User-oriented, trustworthy and well-functioning network of libraries in Estonia contributes to the development of educated, successful and happy society.

As 21st century libraries, our activity is based on three **key values** - trustworthiness, user-centeredness and creativity.

We are trustworthy

Libraries are professional and neutral, they support the functioning of fact- and knowledge-based society, and they guide people safely through the complicated maze of information.

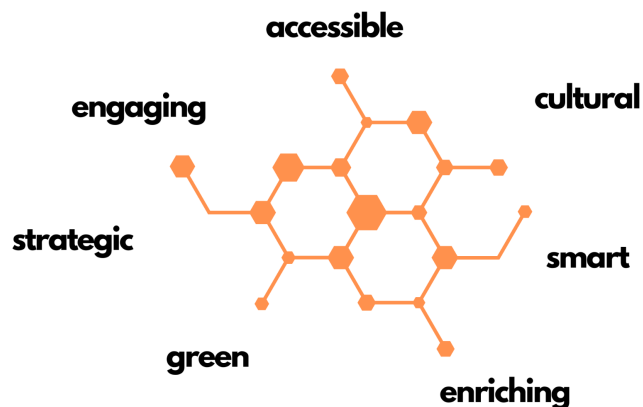
We are user-centered

Libraries consider the needs of every member of the society and provide everybody an equal access to information and active engagement in the community. To adapt to fast changes, libraries are flexible, diverse and innovative.

We are creative

Libraries are inspiring, engaging and encouraging places for communicating, learning and discovering. Libraries shape reading habits and promote good literature.

We, the 21st century libraries, have agreed on seven key principles which need to be considered when developing libraries and their services. Additionally, we have defined general principles for developing the Estonian library network on both the national and local level.



21st century library is:

accessible

Libraries are accessible and available to everyone in Estonia regardless of age, gender, nationality, location, special needs, financial means, etc. Libraries create equal opportunities by providing free access to services.

cultural

Libraries shape reading and learning habits starting from early age and increase people's awareness of literature. Libraries are irreplaceable guides through the exciting and diverse literary landscape.

strategic

Libraries work purposefully and effectively. Both the state and the local municipalities understand and value the crucial cultural, educational and social role of libraries in development of the society. Libraries are well run organisations with high capacity to learn and evolve.

enriching

Libraries are important places of learning, both in terms of formal, informal and non-formal education and as life-long learning. Libraries provide access to wide selection of information and learning opportunities, thus helping people to have more choices in life and ways to contribute as active members of a community.

smart

Libraries skilfully use new technologies in developing their services. Libraries have the capacity to offer relevant, up-to-date and user-focused services in a rapidly changing digital world, and bridge the digital gap in the society.

green

Libraries are essentially part of circular economy, promoting a mindset in which things don't have to be necessarily owned, but they can be temporarily used. Libraries are at the forefront of sustainable solutions and promoters of environmentally conscious approach to reduce waste and unnecessary duplication.

engaging

Libraries bring together and empower communities by providing space and opportunities both for mental and physical well-being. Libraries offer people opportunities to enjoy the rich content organised by others as well as space to organise their own activities or events. Libraries are open and democratic platforms for debates and discussions.

21st century library strategic directions

1. ACCESSIBLE LIBRARY

- brings services as close to people as possible, carries out its activities outside of the library premises, and offers **comfortable and flexible solutions** based on users' needs, habits and trajectories;
- applies the **open library** principles by allowing access to key services outside of the usual working hours and by considering users' needs for setting opening times;
- designs a **seamless, smooth and thoughtful visitor journey**, which needs to be safe and not overly time-consuming when using the public transport, promotes access with environmentally friendly means of transport by investing into parking and charging facilities, and in the remote low-density areas provides mobile library services where necessary;
- practices **universal design principles** throughout user's lifecycle in planning and implementing both physical facilities and activities, so that they could be accessed and enjoyed to greatest extent possible by everybody.
- grants access not only to physical space but also to **digital space**, where all services, activities and materials help to broaden the participatory opportunities of all people regardless of age or special needs;
- offers **services in different languages** and to people from different cultural backgrounds, thus helping people to orient better in Estonian language, culture and society;
- collects regularly the **feedback** from both the existing and the potential users and conducts satisfaction surveys and other research on users' needs.
- involves **users and different stakeholders** in service development, testing and validation, including youth, elderly, people with special needs, etc.
- employs open, trustworthy, friendly and welcoming professionals.

2. CULTURAL LIBRARY

- encourages people to read and **shapes reading habits** from early ages;
- **develops collections** in a manner which considers the needs and interests of people with different ages and backgrounds;
- benchmarks **sufficient resources for acquiring books** and other materials so that the library collections are representative, diverse and accessible, and the waiting times would be reasonable and services fast and easily available;
- includes **materials in different formats** in their collections, including e-books, films and music, and provides access to main newspapers and journals;
- **renews collections regularly** by continuously acquiring new books and other materials while also excluding older books and materials;
- **collaborates actively with variety of institutions and organisations**, including kindergartens, schools, vocational schools and universities, other cultural and heritage institutions, and language and literature associations;
- pays special attention to the **work with children and youth** by acquiring a wide selection of children and youth literature, organising activities in cooperation with schools and specialised organisations to promote reading habits, and supporting schools in fulfilling their curricula through joint initiatives and conducting library lessons;
- **involves actively writers**, poets, translators, illustrators, linguists and representatives of other cultural fields in library's activities by organising meetings with readers and introducing good literature to wider audiences;
- **shares recommendations and reading experiences** to readers and guides people in the diverse and exciting world of literature;
- designs the **library's physical facilities** in the way to provide users attractive, comfortable and functional space which allows individual concentration, but also co-working and co-creation;
- employs professionals who passionately love literature and look at the world with endless curiosity.

3. STRATEGIC LIBRARY

- prepares and approves a **strategic development plan** which sets the library's mission, vision, strategic objectives and activities together with necessary resources and division of responsibilities for at least a four-year period.
- assesses and analyses its cultural, educational, social and economic **impact**;
- **communicates effectively** its goals and impact to wider audiences and raises awareness of the policy makers;
- builds strong **collaborative networks** with other cultural, educational and social

institutions, associations and private enterprises;

- participates in the **decision-making processes** for cultural, educational, social and regional development policies and other related policy areas;
- creates necessary conditions for **providing high-quality public service**, particularly through the investment into multifunctional facilities both for the public and for securing contemporary working conditions for the employees;
- employs strategically thinking and purposefully acting professionals.

4. ENRICHING LIBRARY

- enhances **information, media and digital literacy** and awareness and contributes to the development of knowledge- and fact-based society;
- offers a wide range of **life-long learning and self-development** opportunities both as organised activities as well as individually, planning and implementing of these activities will be carried out in cooperation with specialists;
- helps people to do better in life by providing and mediating the literature necessary for people to increase their **competitiveness on the labor market**, by making available digital training programs and materials, and by implementing retraining activities;
- contributes to the functioning of a **democratic society** and raises civic awareness, helps people to actively participate in social processes and to have a say in shaping their living environment;
- creates prerequisites for people whose mother tongue is different from Estonian to quickly **integrate into Estonian society** and cultural space by participating in programs supporting integration, distributing information to target groups, advising them on the use of national e-services, conducting language learning programs and providing opportunities for practising communication with native speakers;
- prioritises **continuous self-improvement** to develop competencies related to the professional library standards, library employees participate in domestic and foreign exchange programs to learn about good practices from other Estonian and foreign libraries;
- employs professionals who value learning and development of them-selves and others.

5. SMART LIBRARY

- ensures the availability of the main services through **digital channels**, the skilful application of new technologies expands the range of users, allows offering flexible solutions and makes the services more efficient;
- offers the users an **access to e-books** both locally and online, allowing e-books to be rented without coming to the library;
- makes **modern technical equipment** available for both the employees and the users, including a modern hardware, fixed and wireless secure Internet connection, printing

and scanning facilities, the possibility of reading online publications and other equipment that supports the implementation of educational and leisure activities;

- **invests regularly** into technological capabilities, including hardware and software upgrades, which enable libraries to keep up with users' expectations and needs;
- provides **automated services** to offer users a flexible, fast and secure experience, including self-service solutions where possible, 24-hour solutions and book lending machines have been created for the delivery and return of books, artificial intelligence is applied in the organisation of services and communication with users;
- offers the citizens convenient and simple **event-based services** throughout users' lifespan, which would enable people to access the services they need without looking for them;
- contributes to reducing the **digital divide** in society by providing access to digital services and tools to all interested parties and by training and advising users on the use of digital tools;
- employs digitally literate and innovative professionals with broad outlook.

6. GREEN LIBRARY


- considers the **principles of sustainable development** when constructing and remodelling buildings, using environmentally friendly materials and technologies and keeping in mind the multi-functionality and cross-use possibilities of the premises;
- ensures convenient access to the library with **environmentally friendly means of transport**, bicycle parking and charging points for electric mobility devices are created near the library;
- sets an example for others with their behaviour, **reducing the ecological footprint** of the activities, limiting waste, organising environmentally friendly events and applying the Green Office principles on a daily basis;
- promotes the principles of **environmental sustainability** in the society at large, organises awareness-raising events and offers services supporting the circular economy, including the collections of items, i.e., the lending of tools, sports equipment, musical instruments, etc.;
- offers people an opportunity to **share equipment and use co-working spaces**, thus supporting entrepreneurship and creativity and providing suitable conditions for remote work;
- reduce the **environmental impacts related to publishing and handling of books** and other publications, the services of the national exchange collection are used to supplement or replace the collections, and people are advised on dealing with used books;
- employs professionals who care about the environment and assess the ecological impact of their actions.

7. ENGAGING LIBRARY

- offers favourable **conditions for people and communities to create** and operate by themselves, providing them with necessary spaces and tools;
- provide a **democratic, respectful and neutral discussion space**, which promotes open communication, debate and exchange of ideas;
- brings together representatives of **different generations** to pass on knowledge and skills, support younger people in their development and contribute to the active participation of elderly in society;
- acts as a **meeting place for community members** with similar interests, promotes joint activities and implements new initiatives, the library is an open meeting place for people and ideas;
- keeps alive a **community memory** by encouraging people to take an interest in the history and traditions of their country or region and by supporting them in community and family history research;
- involves **volunteers** in its activities and people are offered additional opportunities to actively contribute to society;
- **shares actively and broadly information** about the library's services, events and opportunities in the most appropriate channels for different target groups, including using both their own and municipal websites, print and digital media, cultural calendars, social media and partners' channels;
- uses **playful and engaging solutions** to generate interest and involve users in its activities, for example by organising various games, competitions, challenges, polls and campaigns;
- employs professionals with collaborative mindset and open to new ideas and people

8. IN ESTONIA AS A WHOLE

- all libraries, including public, school, specialised and academic libraries form a **coherent and well-functioning network** that ensures a systematic approach to the development of efficient and user-oriented services;
- the development of libraries is based on the **principles agreed in national development documents**, including the principles agreed in the country's long-term strategy "Estonia 2035", the Estonian Culture Development Plan 2021-2030, the Estonian Educational Development Plan 2021-2035 and other national development documents;
- the management of libraries is **well coordinated**, the roles between local governments, various ministries, institutions and universities are clearly defined;
- library owners, including the state, local governments, universities and other institutions, have included library services in their **development strategies**;
- a **sufficient number of employees** is ensured in libraries to provide high-quality



service, and library employees are paid a **competitive salary**, which creates the prerequisites for the subsequent growth of specialists;

- the state, in cooperation with local governments, increases support for the **development of the competences** of library specialists and raises the value of the library profession in society, there are opportunities for obtaining higher education in the fields of library and information sciences;
- the development of **new service models**, the cross-use of services and the interoperability of the data will be supported, a **unified library system** for users will be launched and the national identity card will be introduced as a nationwide library card;
- the **creation of versatile collections** based on the needs of the population is supported and financing for the acquisition of books and other publications is increased;
- the digitisation of publications and **increasing availability of digital content** are supported so that everyone has access to digital content regardless of the digital device, time and place, and a unified infrastructure is centrally developed for the library services through digital channels, including nationwide lending of e-publications and audiobooks;
- **surveys** of library visitors and non-visitors are regularly conducted, **statistics** of the library field are constantly collected, analysed and interpreted, and the quality assessment of library services is carried out;
- the state and municipalities **collaborate closely with non-governmental organisations** and associations and support the implementation of cross-disciplinary activities and participation in **international networks** and projects.