

Case Studies on Open Innovation in Libraries

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ABSTRACT

Open innovation (sometimes also called design thinking, user participation or co-creation) means the participation of an institution's stakeholders (customers, suppliers, competitors, etc.) in its innovation processes. Concerning libraries, open innovation integrates the views of users (as customers), software houses or design companies (as suppliers) as well as other libraries (as competitors) into the development strategy of a library. Innovation processes include information inflows (application of external knowledge in the innovating library) and information outflows (dissemination of internal knowledge for reuse in other institutions). Innovations happen on a large scale (for instance, planning new library buildings) as well as on a small scale (e.g., modifying an existing library service). The poster will present the open innovation framework, methods used, results of a questionnaire and will introduce paradigmatic case studies of open innovation in libraries. In addition, we will use the poster to invite conference attendees to share their own experiences and opinions.

KEYWORDS

open innovation, design thinking, library, case study

INTRODUCTION

Open innovation considers both importing external ideas into an institution's knowledge and innovation processes as well as exporting its experiences to others. Chesbrough was the first to introduce open innovation into research. One of his most important findings is "equal importance given to external knowledge, in comparison to internal knowledge" (Chesbrough, 2006, p. 11). Open innovation means the participation of an institution's multiple stakeholders (customers, suppliers, competitors, etc.) in its innovation planning as well as the dissemination of internal ideas to others. The majority of open innovation approaches can be identified in large high-tech and – later – in other companies in different industries; however, there are some projects in government and public administration as well (Feller, Finnegan & Nilsson, 2011). The use of open innovation can deploy pathways outside an institution's current businesses and evoke

new products or even new markets (Chesbrough, 2006).

There are two important aspects in open innovation projects, namely the stakeholder (especially user) involvement and the creation of a supporting eco-system. "The users are in the spotlight: an invention becomes an innovation only if users become a part of the value creation process. ... Creating a well-functioning eco-system that allows co-creation becomes essential for Open Innovation. In this eco-system stakeholders are collaborating along and across industry and sector-specific value chains to co-create solutions to socio-economic and business challenges" (European Commission, 2016, p. 16). As a basic principle, "open" is a quasi-synonym for "user-centric," whereby "users" are both actual users as well as potential users, including former, possibly dissatisfied users.

A perfect example for public sector innovation and a user-centric institution that benefits from open innovation is the library (Scupola & Zanfei, 2016). It already was an ever changing and evolving institution in the past, which now, more than ever, has "to keep pace with the needs of a modern information society" (Jantz, 2012, p. 3). Concerning libraries, open innovation integrates the views of users and non-users (as actual and potential customers), publishing houses, information services, software houses, design companies, etc. (as suppliers) as well as other libraries or further institutions (as competitors) into the development strategy of a library. Library knowledge and innovation processes include information inflows (application of external knowledge in the innovating library) and information outflows (dissemination of internal knowledge for reuse in other institutions). Innovation happens both on a large scale (for instance, planning new library buildings) as well as on a small scale (e.g., slightly modifying an existing library service). Of course, open innovation is applicable to all kinds of innovation, including library services (services of the physical as well of the digital library and those which are needed in the present or future knowledge society), new library organizational processes and new infrastructures.

Open innovation in libraries is also known as co-creation or the "participatory library." Sometimes, processes of open innovation are called "design-thinking" (Bech-Petersen, Mærkedahl, & Krogbæk, 2016). The governance is always distributed; library staff, users and other stakeholders work together as co-producers of innovative processes.

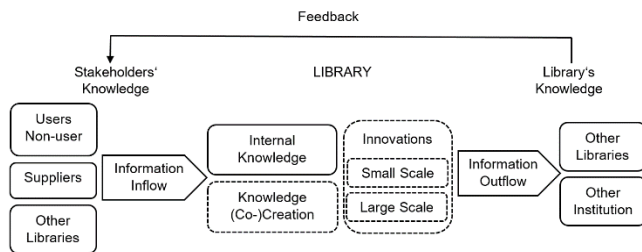


Figure 1. Theoretical model of open innovation in libraries

Since the advent of open innovation in research dates back more than a decade and first (however, very rare) projects in libraries started shortly after this, it is about time to study the success (or failure) of such projects. Our model of open innovation in libraries is depicted in Figure 1. Based on this theoretical model, we have three research questions (RQs):

RQ1 If a library applies open innovation, what are its sources, means and tools of information inflow?

RQ2 What concrete innovations do result from the open innovation process?

RQ3 If a library successfully applied open innovation, what are the addressees of information outflows in order to reuse the innovation?

METHODS

Besides literature review and content analysis of libraries' websites, our method is strongly related to case study research (Eisenhardt, 1989). While analyzing literature and websites we were able to identify six libraries (Table 1), which reported on experienced open innovation projects.

| Case | Country | Library Type |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Chicago Public Library | USA | Public |
| Dokk1, Aarhus | Denmark | Public |
| Helsinki Public Library | Finland | Public |
| National Library Board | Singapore | National & Public |
| Roskilde Univ. Library | Denmark | Academic |
| ZBW, Kiel | Germany | Special |

Table 1. Case studies of open innovation in libraries

In order to gather empirical data on open innovation projects in libraries, we created a questionnaire with 14 questions and sent it to all our case study libraries. Published literature on our case completed our analyses.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS (SHORT VERSION)

Currently, libraries are adapting the idea and allow information inflows from diverse stakeholders. We can confirm that an information inflow may result in small as well as in large-scale innovations in the investigated libraries. Small-scale innovations refer to additional services that have been introduced through co-creation activities. In contrast, large-scale innovations evolve a change in the library, like the definition of a library as public space for the community. In the investigated libraries, new products have been developed together with users, suppliers, other libraries and companies. The main challenge is to share these best practices with other libraries.

FORMAT AND EXPERIENCE

Results of the survey and literature review will be presented in the form of a poster. Additionally, we would like to invite conference attendees to share their own experiences and opinions by adding sticky notes to the poster. This way, a dialogue will be possible among attendees visiting our poster at different times (markers and materials will be provided by us). These contributions will be summarized and presented later on in a blog post on the ASIS&T European Chapter website.

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