Sustainability Through Extroversion: The Curious Case of Municipal and Public Libraries in Greece

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ABSTRACT:
Public and municipal libraries, besides being keepers of local community documents and books, are - or should be - modern hubs of knowledge and diffusers of information to the community that surrounds them. This article reveals the areas of extroversion that municipal and public libraries can undertake, focusing on the efforts they need to make in order to best interact with local communities, going beyond their traditional usage of addressing only their patrons. Furthermore, the results of a survey conducted in the frame of the 4th Panhellenic Public Libraries Conference are presented, showing how much extroverted librarians working in public and municipal libraries are considered, as well as what kind of extroversion programs they implement in their library.

Keywords: public libraries, municipal libraries, extroversion, innovation, sustainability of libraries, lifelong learning, information literacy

1. Introduction

In this article, part of which was a workshop presentation during the 4th Panhellenic Congress of Municipal Libraries (Heraklion, 2022), an attempt is made to analyze the "sustainability" of public and municipal libraries through a more socio-cultural approach, examining the concept of "extroversion" of their services (Vitolla, 2019). How can a public or municipal library be seen as an "added value" to its surrounding community? How could someone promote the services of the library where they work? How can a municipal library be connected with society in such a way that it could be considered as a cultural knowledge hub? Which is the role of information literacy programs in the promotion of knowledge? Finally, an attempt is made to estimate the extent to which Greek librarians feel comfortable regarding their exposure and extroversion to the public and also their need to create channels of communication within the library community. To be answered this question, a quantitative research through a questionnaire required to be conducted. The questionnaire was initially distributed electronically and later it was promoted to 140 Municipal and Public libraries, which are available in the official website of Municipal Libraries, of the National Library of Greece (NLG network, 2018).

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2. Extroversion of Greek Libraries

The word "extroversion", especially when used to refer to an organization such as the public libraries, simply describes the tendency and intention of the specific organization to extrovert its ideas and services to the wider public, stressing the ability to absorb the "informational gaps" that may have been observed in the community, by covering and making them an integral part of the it.

According to a research in the findings of the Greek Statistical Authority, it was observed that in comparison to 2018 (ELSTAT, 2018), when the number of municipal and public libraries was 145 and 42 respectively, their number was significantly decreased to 141 and 39 respectively in 2020 (ELSTAT, 2020). The following Figure (Figure 1) shows the recording of these data, for those specific years. Besides, the Hellenic Statistical Authority conducts statistical censuses every two years, so the statistical findings of 2022, will be theoretically available towards 2023.
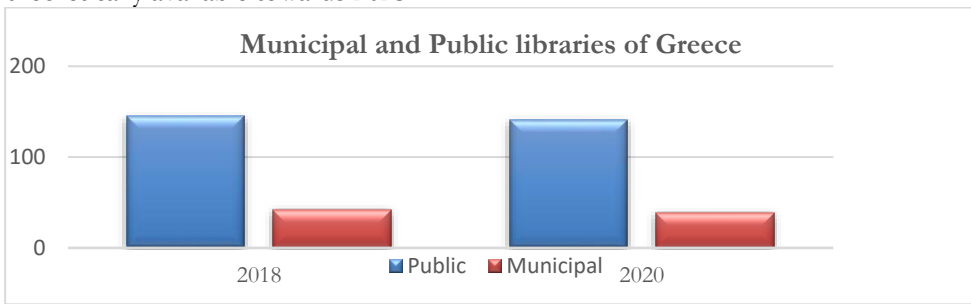

Figure 1. Comparative representation of the number of municipal and public libraries in Greece during 2018 and 2020

Despite the "covid-19" pandemic and the subsequent quarantine, the users participation was greater than expected, reaching 1,659,000 in-person users in 2020 (obviously, this number is indicative and it certainly refers to the first two months of 2020, given that since March 2020 a lot of restrictive measures, including library suspension, have been implemented), demonstrating human need to obtain accurate information from reliable sources as well as their desire to come closer to a "carrier" of culture. Also, as seen in Figure 2, during the quarantine there was a considerable increase in the use of the Data Bases held by municipal and public libraries (a slight difference between the years 2018 and 2020 which reaches 17%), while the access number to web pages, although it was decreased compared to 2018, remained quite high (ELSTAT, 2018).
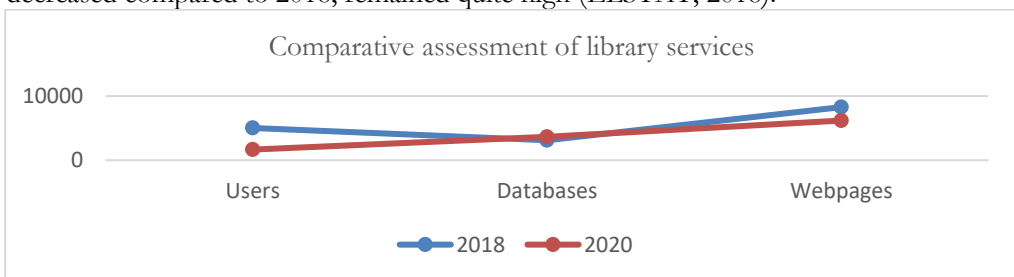

Figure 2. Comparative representation of the services provided by libraries during 2018 and 2020

Therefore, the purpose of municipal and public libraries should be the creation of communication channels within the society surrounding them. Also, their role as "community hubs" should be made clear, do they could be in a position to offer educational, cultural and recreational activities in such a dynamic way, that they could attract new patrons, but also satisfying the existing ones (Guandalini, 2022). The sustainability of municipal libraries is now considered more imperative than ever, since their institutional function and purpose is inextricably intertwined with the socio-cultural condition of the community they serve (Halme, 2001).

The promotion and advertising of various services, actions, and also cultural and educational programs that libraries may provide, should be done continuously, in order to communicate and make all these known to the wider public, even to people who have not implemented reading activities and visits to libraries into their daily routine.

Furthermore, what is the social image of a librarian? If one asks people from different age groups what they think a librarian looks like, most of them will spontaneously answer that they are usually females, and mainly elderly people, with a specific external appearance such as a bun in the hair and pair of glasses. This person is usually crouched behind a desk surrounded by stacks of books, and he/she stands up from this position, either to put books back on the shelves or to enforce silence, pointing the index finger to the mouth and making a "shush" sound[1]. It is high time that this stereotypical image prevailing in many countries around the world including Greece, where the librarian is a silent, distant person only putting books back on the shelves and constantly demanding silence, should be changed. In fact, in one research conducted in the USA to present the most introverted professions, librarians and archivists, are ranked in the top-20 whose main feature is introversion (Nystrom, 2022). However, the librarian of the 21st century must pursue modern extroversion skills as well as communicative actions accessible to every single user of the library and understandable by all of its members. Inclusion is a concept that can be cultivated within a cultural institution such as the library. Besides, extroversion, within a legitimate context, enhances the sustainability and further development of the library services (Loach, 2022).

In this paper, four main axes of how to strengthen extroversion actions towards society and community that frame the operation of a public library, will be developed (Baumgartner, 2017). Firstly, extroversion from librarian themselves as a physical entity, who is part of a fairly introverted organization, such as the library. In addition, extroversion through the communication of librarians with the senior administration executives to which the library maybe is part of, in order to implement various requests and innovation activities, but also accounting elements, especially those presenting the library as an integral and necessary part of society. Regarding the third axis of extroversion of a public library, that covers the efforts of librarians and information science professionals with state or local society agents that can become sponsors, supporters and advocators of funding programs and donations for educational and cultural activities and programmes. The last axis is that of expanding and strengthening cooperative schemes

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[1] "shush" [v]: to tell someone to be quiet, especially by saying shush, or by putting your finger against your lips - Oxford Dictionary

with a multitude of cultural - and not only- organizations, something that also covers the largest part of the questionnaire analysis that will be cited in the second chapter.

2.1 First Axis: Extroversion of librarians as distinct personalities and professionals

The information scientist, whether librarian or archivist, should find ways to communicate with library patrons and comprehend their informational needs. New technologies invade in every aspect of our daily lives, so librarians are required to become familiar with them. The catalog era focusing only on the description of one single material is quite outdated nowadays, while the trend of modern librarianship aims at the creation of conceptual and ontological models, which are interconnected in the information universe.

It goes without saying, that information science professionals should be motivated and familiar with the use of computing applications, such as Microsoft Office. Apart from that, they should be sufficiently aware of the correct use of internet, being able to avoid effectively fake news, evaluating the validity and accuracy of the information published on its website. They should also be competent enough to look for fresh concepts collocating with updated information, grading their search from the broadest to the narrowest terms and using a variety of databases to draw information from them, with critical thinking skills.

In addition, the existence of archival material as a part of the collection of a public library is very common. So, it is advisable that librarians and information scientists should possess basic guidelines for documenting archival resources. For this reason, training in the process of digitizing the archival material, and in its retrieval through a repository or through the use of a digital platform, is highly recommended. Of course, it more than clear, that some skills like the creation of a digital repository or the technical support of the library website, require special knowledge. However, the librarian of the 21st century can gain additional knowledge that will help him/her to cover some basic knowledge gaps in these fields through the attendance to various study programs, but also through continuous training and education, with participation in workshops, seminars, and conferences. No one can dispute, that by possessing a broad knowledge, we better understand what is related to the library in which we are working and that through lifelong training actions, human extroversion is strengthened, since we collaborate with colleagues, while at the same time our confidence is built, knowing that we have mastered a piece of specialized knowledge related to library service.

Finally, criticism and evaluation of both library infrastructure and the services provided to its users, play an important role in the enhancement of personal extroversion of a librarian. The library workers themselves should be open and bear a positive stance to any kind of criticism and assessment regarding them, the library or the services provided. Something like that, could be achieved either by short, face-to-face interviews, either through structured questionnaires. An important condition for both methods is to clearly capture the research framework of the evaluation. Criticism of any kind, whether negative or positive, can only have significant and substantial benefits. On the one hand, positive feedback further strengthens the self-esteem and professional appreciation of the

employee, and on the contrary, a negative review puts concerns under investigation, in order to identify the weak points and find ways to overpass and deal with them.

In any case, through criticism, even from people of different age groups, social classes, genders, and races, who are patrons and users of library services, without accurately knowing the challenges of a librarian's profession, we can draw important conclusions and raise awareness on issues that make some services difficult to the general public as well as find ways of solving them.

2.2 Second Axis: Communication with Administration

By the word "communication", we mean the process of creation, transmission, interpretation and utilization of messages and information (Chytiris, 2006). There are two main ways of communication: verbal and non-verbal (gestures, postures, facial expressions). Concerning the verbal, it is divided into two main categories: the oral and the written. Oral communication includes speeches, formal or informal discussions, while written is mainly related to notes, letters and correspondence. In the second category, the message that the sender wants to convey to the final recipient, is captured more carefully and clearly. Also, in comparison to verbal communication, complex information is conveyed more effectively and more accurately.

Whether the organization to which an employee belongs is public or private, the importance and the role of media communication to its modern administration used to make the necessary changes in, should be integral with high priority. Communication processes and organizational change are the two sides of the same coin. Accepting the change and successfully implementing it, requires an alteration to the behavior between both management leaders and employees. Through communication channels, employees are informed not only about changes in their daily working life, but also about new, innovative ways to perform their duties.

The active participation of employees in changing the culture of a public library, by having the irritability to express their ideas, reduces the initial stress, since those involved become partners in taking decisions, many of which have been expressed by them. In addition, through open and real communication, the culture of trustworthiness and cooperation is strengthened. In addition, the dissemination of knowledge and information is achieved in a more efficient way (Siegrist, 1996).

It is important for all employees to freely express their opinion about the upcoming changes and to suggest ways to improve various aspects of the services provided by the organization to which they belong, such as a municipal or public library. After all, who knows better the weaknesses of a library than them? The implementation of a holistic change in the organizational structure of a public library is very challenging. The capable and competent decision-makers, whether they are subordinate to the organization itself, such as the librarians, or they belong to the wider institutional framework surrounding the information center (e.g. Municipal Authority, Ministry of Education, etc.), should pose the suitable conditions for the support and participation of their employees, adequately handle negative emotions and create a friendly atmosphere, open to discussion, promoting thereby effective leadership methods. In conclusion, the proper handling of change is based on the administration's desire to restructure the organizational culture, to choose

appropriate management tools and to rely on the will of the organization members. It is a continuous updated education and training procedure (Kefis, 2020).

Bearing this in mind, all public librarians and generally employees in libraries without any exception, ranging from the lowest paid to the highest ones, should feel free and safe to communicate issues that prevent the proper operation of the library and the provision of services to its users. These issues, however, should be targeted and pointed with clarity, in order to find the right methods to be implemented. If, for example, the purchase of logistical equipment is deemed necessary, including new computers and innovative technological equipment such as 3D printers or virtual reality glasses (VR), or subscriptions to electronic databases which guarantee a valid and valuable content, this should be communicated to the superior municipal authority and once the purchase request is satisfied, librarians should be properly be trained to explain their proper use, whenever asked by their patrons.

Within this paper, the deduction that arises is the need to increase the library staff of public libraries with qualified information scientists. The understaffing of libraries, especially in the municipal and public area in Greece, impedes their proper functioning. Therefore, the need for specialized staff as well as an increase in the budget and funding, should be continuous, in a justified and reasonable context. Finally, it's worth mentioning that, regarding the technological equipment and the services provided, librarians could receive feedback from the library users. Listening to their opinion, could give them food for thought and new ideas about the space configuration. These new suggestions should be firstly evaluated and then submitted to their directors, who in turn can implement them.

By recording the deficiencies (animate or inanimate) on the one hand, librarians highlight that they are aware of the current situation, desiring a substantial improvement of the services provided in their library and on the other hand, it demonstrates their will to make their dreams come true, building bonds with their community by leaving their social footprint in an active way. In other words, their actions clearly prove that librarian's sector, is still alive and active, claiming modern resources, innovative means and new services, in order to serve library users.

2.3 Third Axis: Financing - Sponsorships

The field of finding financial resources and funding, beyond the annual budget pertaining to each library, is a time and energy-consuming process, which requires very good communicational skills. Libraries must open their gates to their local community, so that the latter will be able to understand the work required to maintain a library and therefore contribute to this effort.

For this reason, a library, participating in various social actions such as the exhibitions of local products, (having the possibility to support with little research in its sources the printing and placement of a poster for the historical development of each local product), gets in touch with important representatives of the local economy, communicating thus its financial needs. In addition, book bazaars of additional copies, are a small yet reliable source of income for the library in order to cover urgent financial needs. The search for local sponsors and "library friends" within the local community, significantly enhances its

mission. The existence of programs and the funding offered by the European Union[2] should not be considered of minor importance, given that it can be implemented both to public and municipal libraries. Finally, it should be mentioned that companies with high budgets for their technological equipment, frequently withdraw it. Bearing this in mind, institutions such as public libraries, could take advantage of this by reusing the recycled retired equipment. In Greek society there are various companies that take over this role. To name a few: the Recycling of Devices S.A.[3], Free Recycle[4], and the Ecological Society of Recycling[5].

Each of these efforts must be clearly delineated, thoroughly recording all the stages of implementation, so that they present -in a documented way-the actions required by the library to discover financial resources.

2.4 Fourth Axis: Partnerships - Cooperations

The last axis refers to partnerships and collaborations initially on interpersonal level with the exchange of opinions and experiences as well as interaction with other colleagues who, although they may work in a different kind of library, their know-how and experience, make them able to give solutions to issues arising in a municipal or public library. This approach not only reflects a problem, but it also enhances trustworthiness in relationships through the exchange of ideas and experiences, building a collaborative network on an interpersonal level. Most librarians working either in municipal or public libraries share the same stress and anxiety about everyday management issues. Thus, the strengthening of collaborative actions on an interpersonal level and in combination with the inclusive approach, makes it easier to find solutions, weakening at the same time the feeling of loneliness.

Moreover, if a municipal or public library can be considered as a single organization, five key areas where partnerships can be achieved with varying benefits, are set out. The first concerns the cooperation between municipal and public libraries. Collaborative networks have already been developed among municipal libraries, such as the summer campaign organized and held during the summer months by the National Library of Greece. However, new partnerships with libraries belonging to neighboring municipalities or within the same region must be always on the daily agenda of librarians. The concept of exchange between libraries is always a good idea. For example, if a library has a 3D printer, it can lend it to another as a "loan" and the other library can, in turn, grant the passcodes for remote access to various databases to the first library. In such a way, there is primarily a financial benefit, since one library undertakes the purchase and maintenance of quite expensive equipment (such as a 3D printer), and the other pays the subscription to a Database. In this way, the needs and expenses of a library are shared. It should also be mentioned that the development of relationships on a more organizational level, is

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[2] EU funding programmes. Your Europe: an official website of the European Union. Enterprise Europe Network. 08/09/2022 europa.eu/youreurope/business/finance-funding/getting-funding/eu-funding-programmes/index_en.htm Accessed 20 Nov. 2022.

[3] www.electrocycle.gr/

[4] free-recycle.gr/

[5] www.ecorec.gr/ecorec/index.php?lang=en

advantageous for both parties, since the library needs are more easily recorded and then attributed to the members (Jankowska, 2010).

Additionally, the cooperation of municipal and public libraries with museums and cultural institutions of the region where each library is located, should be mentioned. In the United States of America (Bullard, 2016), public libraries provide their registered users with free entrance cards for the local museums of the wider area, as long as they meet certain criteria, such as being members of the respective library by showing their card member. In this case, the key role of the library is to inform its users, who wish to visit the museum, providing them with information about these cultural organizations, through collections or its occasional periodical exhibitions. In addition, the cooperation of municipal and public libraries with cultural associations of the region should be mentioned. For example, the adoption of a "small pocket park" by a cultural club, apart from tree planting and configuration of the space, can be used cooperatively with a presentation of local products or books for sale. At the same time, a library can inform its club members about sustainable and ecological solutions related to daily functional issues, such as energy saving, or the distribution of the local club products in cooperation with the library. This could be possibly supported with archival material showing the development of one local product. For example, if a public library has photographic material of the olive production process, a possible exhibition of local olive products could accompany it. Through such an action, the olive production process is bibliographically documented, while the photographs and representations "advertise" the local, public or municipal collection library. Such actions are embraced by the users of the local community. They are also widely communicated, advertising thus the library services in a quick, efficient and inexpensive way. As a result, the number of library visitors is significantly increased making the municipal library socio-culturally sustainable.

Another cooperation that can be developed between the municipal and public libraries, thus enhancing their sustainability, is the development of joint actions with university libraries. Especially those libraries located nearby an academic institution should pursue this, taking into consideration that the collection of an academic library is much more specialized than that of a municipal or public one.

Therefore, in order to satisfy the research needs of its users, as long as it knows that the informational material is available at the academic collection, the library can act as a "mediator". This can be achieved either by referring the user himself to the academic library, or by using a loan system. Therefore, even without the proper information resources, the library can give the right guidelines to its users by suggesting the right solutions. In this way, the role of municipal and public libraries is advanced, satisfying the informational needs of their users.

During the pandemic (March 2020-May 2020), a lot of actions were taken by many public and municipal libraries mainly related to the sensitive and socially vulnerable groups, such as the elderly. Book loans by courier, book loan extensions, as well as face-to-face and remote service, which is very encouraging. However, libraries could further develop their social sensitivity by creating partnerships with Elderly Employment Centers in order to organize seminars of various topics, such as learning basic computer and smartphones skills, new government applications (such as the app of the personal doctor)

during which familiarization with the new technologies is needed, especially for an elder person who may find this quite complex.

The same applies to accommodation shelters for refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers, as well as for the refugee employment centers that operate near municipal and public libraries. Given the massive influx of refugees and immigrants, from countries such as Syria, Egypt, Iran and most recently Ukraine, these young people who already have a burdened psychology, including very shocking images, such as exile, uprooting, want to find ways of integration, socialization but also self-improvement. Municipal and public libraries, through various actions, also on a voluntary basis, offer a great social and educational work, embracing these people, enhancing their learning skills and integrating them more smoothly into the community surrounding them. Actions, such as reading, information literacy, media education, as well as the development of IT skills can be coordinated and implemented in such a way that they may have immediate and encouraging results.

Finally, and perhaps the most important area of cooperation for most information professionals, is that with the schools of the wider area. In Greece, school libraries with organized information material, providing the student's community with access to valid databases, or with modern logistic equipment and qualified professionals and information scientists who enhance student critical ability, (unfortunately) do not exist. The concept of information literacy, which has been developed in many northern European countries, but also in the USA and Asia, is completely unknown to Greece. Therefore, this role could be taken over by a municipal or public library, even on a voluntary level. This could be achieved without necessarily modifying the school curriculum. Organized and repeated school visits to the library premises, already enhance the possibility of improving services that consequently encourages the development of the research process, critical thinking and creativity of children. Particular emphasis should be paid on the repetition and coordination of this effort, in order to familiarize children with the process of search, evaluation, critical review, realization and also the presentation - in a documented way- of a research in any subject, through information literacy programs. Children constitute the future of every nation and therefore the purpose of any educational process should be the cultivation and development of these skills, which will render them technologically self-sufficient and autonomous. As Mr. Stavros Zoumboulakis (Pantazopoulos, 2020) once mentioned in an interview, "the school should be an institution of knowledge transmission and not one of innovation". Many will agree that the municipal and public libraries can take over this role through cooperative schemes between primary and secondary schools of their area. Municipal and public libraries are a civilization cradle, adding value to the provided services and strengthening with their actions the cultural development of the local community.

3. Advertising and Promotion of Services Provided

Having implemented actions on the four mentioned axes, a public or municipal library should find the way and the means to display and advertise them. Of course, an integral part of such a process is played by social networks, partnerships and cooperations. This can be succeeded not only through extroversion, as mentioned before, in terms of

communicating the common problems and finding a solution, but at the same time through advertising and promotion of library actions.

In addition, social media is an economical, immediate and easy way of promoting the services provided by a municipal library, attracting different people from different age groups. The update is direct and can relate to any topic that a library considers appropriate to be discussed (either about new books added to the collection, or about a new service, or a book presentation). Through various settings, the possibility of comments exchange is given, which in turn favors the criticism and evaluation of the services provided. In fact, it can be done with appropriate insurance policies regarding foul language.

Furthermore, the library website which stands for the first image for a visitor or a potential user, should be simple, easy to navigate, accessible to people with special needs, translated (at least) into English, especially for the tourist areas and rich in audio-visual material. Probably, it may contain some virtual tour-guide videos uploaded to its premises or supporting material for the correct use of an electronic catalog, while depending on the range of its collection, it can share various book recommendations either anniversary or local ones, such as a collection on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Minor Asia disaster.

4. Questionnaire
4.1 Questionnaire description

The questionnaire was distributed through the Google Forms platform, in the context of the workshop "Thinking outside of the books: if people don't visit the library, then library visits people" which took place during the 4th Panhellenic Conference of Municipal Libraries. The librarians who attended it, either live or remotely, were asked to complete the questionnaire during the workshop. However, since the participation was quite limited, the questionnaire was re-sent to 140 municipal and public libraries, which exist in the official Website of Municipal Libraries Network, and in the National Library of Greece (Katsira and Koulouris 2022). So, the quantitative research through the questionnaire lasted a total of 30 days starting from September 24th, first day of the workshop and completed on October 24, 2022.

More analytically, the aim of the research was, on the one hand, to capture the existing situation, regarding the extroversion actions of a municipal or public library and on the other hand to ascertain whether the librarians and workers in these libraries consider themselves quite extroverted. In other words, to find a connection between the personality of the librarian with the axes of extroversion that can stand out through the services of the municipal library.

The questionnaire was anonymous and did not contain any questions related to personal data that could verify the identity of the participants. It contained general questions about the library each librarian works. The results were processed and used exclusively for research purposes and for the creation of the specific article.

The questions were closed - ended and were divided into three main axes. The first concerned the personality of the interviewees, and to what extent they consider themselves extrovert professional librarians, but also if extroversion actions can positively influence the library where they work. The second axis concerned extroversion actions which the

library had already carried out and whether the respondents were positively oriented to the results of these collaborative schemes or not. The last axis was related to the ways of promoting and advertising the services provided by the libraries in which the participants were employees.

In total, 81 questionnaires out of 140 sent, were collected (approximately 60% of the sample). In fact, there were 6 cases where the email listed on the website of the National Library was not working.

4.2 Questionnaire analysis

All (81) participants (100%) agree that the role of libraries should be more intervening in society, abolishing the stereotypical image of a library as a "book warehouse" and transforming it into a modern hub of culture and educational processes. As cited in the international bibliography, the municipal libraries are ranked as the third most important pillar of a society, after the family comfort that home provides and the financial security of work.

Public libraries invasion

No 0%   Yes 100%   ■ Yes ■ No
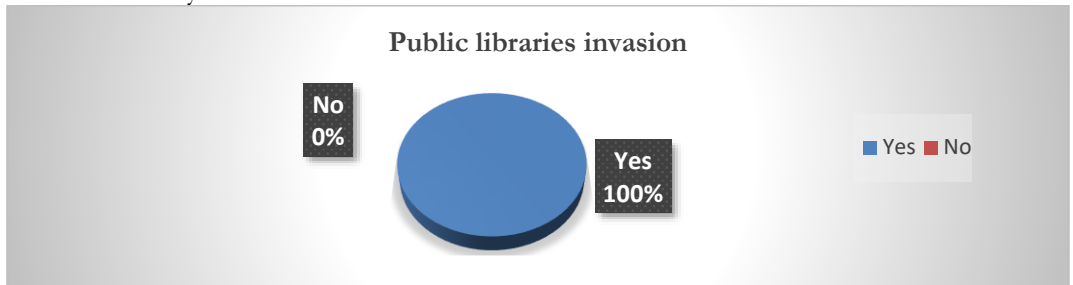
Graph 1. Public Libraries interference to society

Furthermore, as can be seen in Graph 2, all (81) participants responded positively (100%) regarding the contribution of extroversion actions, to the increase of library users. Therefore, it is clearly understood that the increase of library users is definitely intertwined with actions addressed to and including them, making them part of the efforts.
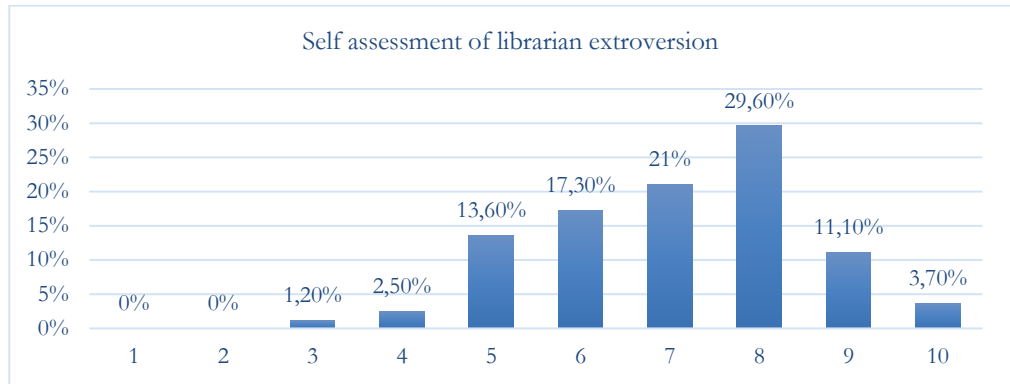
Importance of extroversion for increasing library's patrons

0%   100%   ■ Yes ■ No
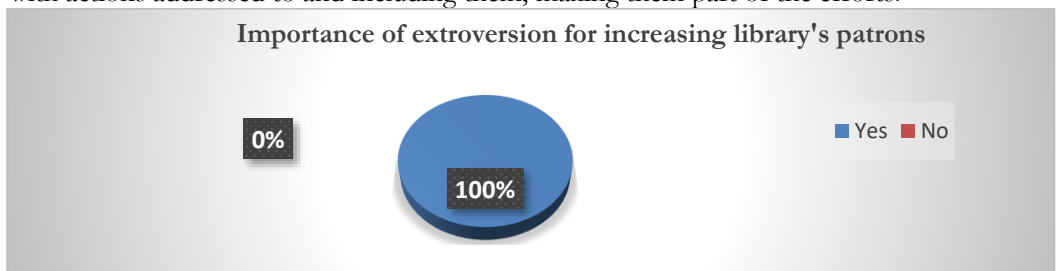
Graph 2. Extroversion of libraries and users increase

Regarding the question "whether extroversion is important for funding increase" the greatest percentage of responses (71.6%) was positive, while there were 23 answers that consider extroversion unrelated to funding. This means that approximately 1 out of 3 participants considers that the promotion and advertising of actions related to the services provided, do not necessarily lead to budget increase.

Extroversion and funding

28%

72%

Yes No
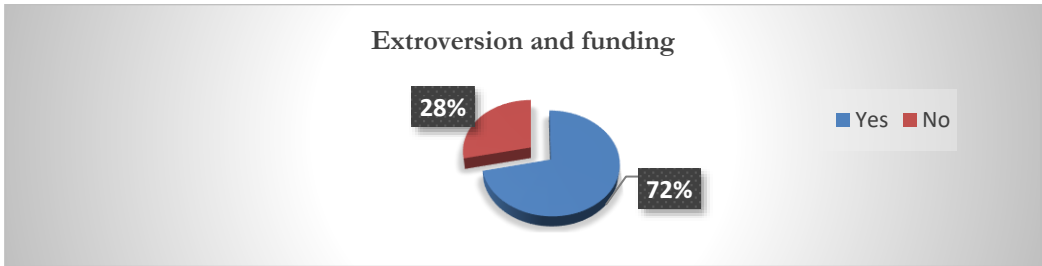
Graph 3: Extroversion and Funding

Reaching the end of the first part of the questionnaire, the answers concerning "how much extroverts do librarians consider themselves", varied. They had to choose closed-ended but graded answers, ranging from zero 0, which was equivalent to "not at all extroverted", to 10 ten which was equivalent to "extremely extroverted". The majority, however, with 24 responses, (approximately one in three), considers himself quite extroverted as an information professional.

Self assessment of librarian extroversion

0%	0%	1,20%	2,50%	13,60%	17,30%	21%	29,60%	11,10%	3,70%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Graph 4: Extroversion of Librarians

As for the second part of the questionnaire, which covered the collaborations performed by the library in which the participant works and whether he/she was satisfied through them or not, the results are quite interesting.

Initially, as can be seen from the following graphs (Graph 5a and Graph 5b), more than three out of four responses (62 out of 81), state that a collaboration with another municipal or public library has occurred. There was also a small but not negligible percentage, about 5%, who did not know if such actions had ever taken place in the library where he/she works.

In terms of satisfaction by those collaborations, most of the respondents were positive, answering that they are almost totally satisfied. 34.4% of the participants graded 9 on the 10-point scale of satisfaction.
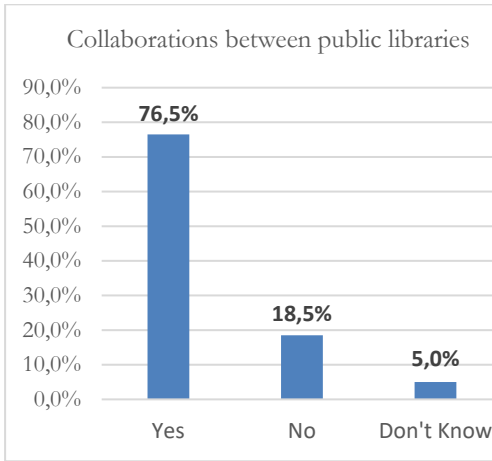
Graph 5a: Collaborations with other municipal/public libraries
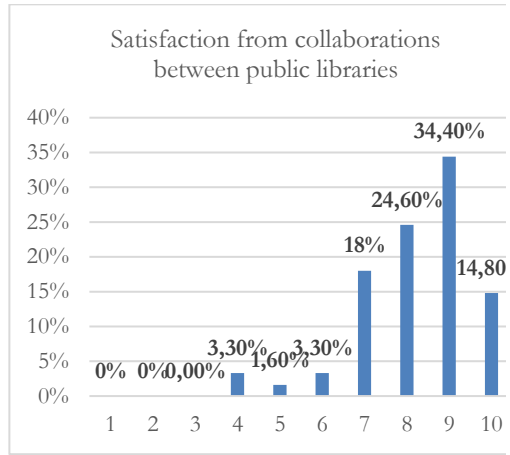
Graph 5b: Satisfaction from cooperation with other public libraries

Following the areas of development of cooperative schemes of the first chapter, the respondents were asked to answer whether they know if any collaboration with various cultural organizations, such as museums has ever occurred or not. The majority of responses in this case are inversely proportional compared to the cooperative model between municipal and public libraries. Specifically, with regard to cultural organizations, most of the respondents with a percentage of almost 80% (Graph 6a) declares that a similar collaboration between the library in which he/she works and a cultural organization has never happened.

However, those who responded positively to the library collaboration with a cultural union, are quite satisfied through this cooperation, giving an average satisfaction rating of 7.85 with an absolute satisfaction rating of 10 (see Graph 6b).

Graph 6a: Collaborations with cultural organizations (e.g., Museums)
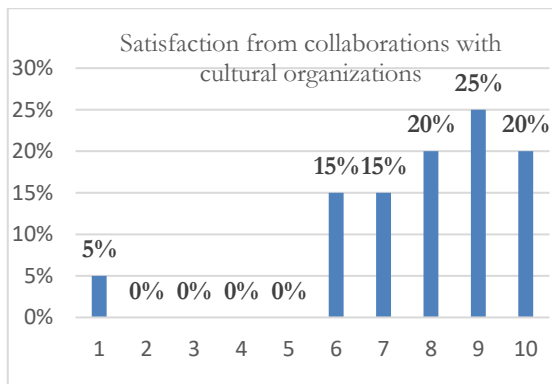
Graph 6b: Satisfaction from the cooperation with other cultural organizations

Next, follows the question regarding cooperations between libraries and structures supporting socially sensitive and vulnerable groups, such as the Public Centers for the Protection of the Elderly (KAPI). As can be seen in Graph 7a, the existing situation in Greek municipal and public libraries is similar to that of cultural organizations. The largest percentage (about 7 out of 10 respondents) declares that his/her library has never cooperated with any structure of social character, such as KAPI, or refugee integration structures.

However, those participating in a similar action, are overall very satisfied with an average of over 8 at 10-point scale of satisfaction (Graph 7b).
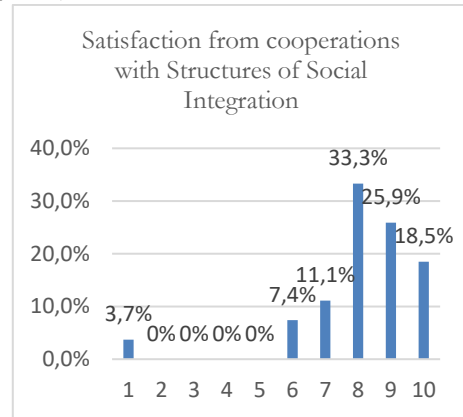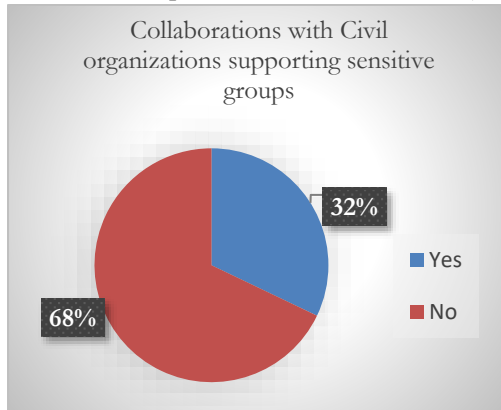
Graph 7a: Cooperation with structures of social integration

Graph 7b. Satisfaction by cooperation with structures of social integration

Following is the question regarding the cooperation between public libraries and academic institutions (Graph 8a). In this kind of cooperation, the percentages are alike to those of cultural centers. About 75% of participants in the survey state that the library they work for, has never cooperated with libraries of academic institutions.
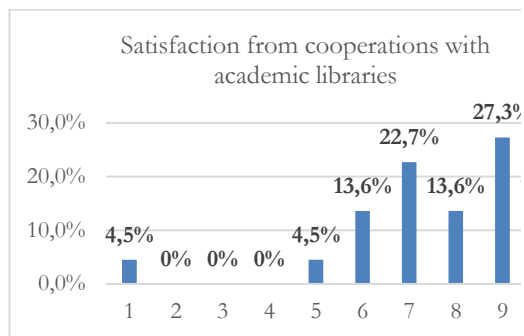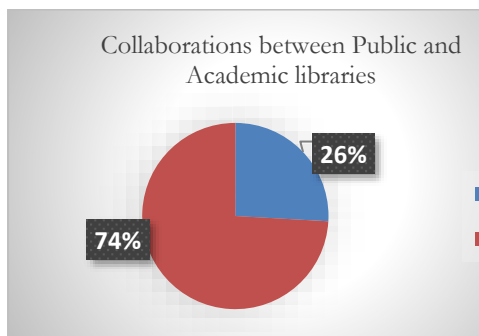

Graph 8a. Cooperation with academic libraries

*Graph 8b. Satisfaction by the cooperation with academic libraries*

However, the 22 participants who stated that the library in which they work, has cooperated with Academic Libraries and Information Centers, remained very satisfied

with the overall partnership. The average satisfaction rate reaches 7.6 with a maximum of 10.

Concluding the second part, the participants were asked whether the library in which they work has ever collaborated with schools or school libraries (Graph 9a). The number of positive answers is very high (around 84%). However, when asked in the third part of the questionnaire, whether the municipal or public library uses a specific program of computer literacy or not, more than half of the participants answered negatively. It is probable that some visits take place in the context of the educational activities of each school, so that the children familiarize themselves with the book and with the process of searching the shelves. Nevertheless, we do not know the frequency of these educational visits and their commitment to a specific learning objective, which the implementation of a comprehensive information literacy program would possibly have. The degree of satisfaction is quite high reaching 8 (7.9% to be exact) with maximum rate 10 (Graph 9b).
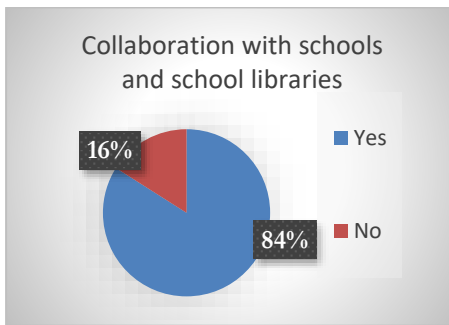

Graph 9a. Cooperation with schools
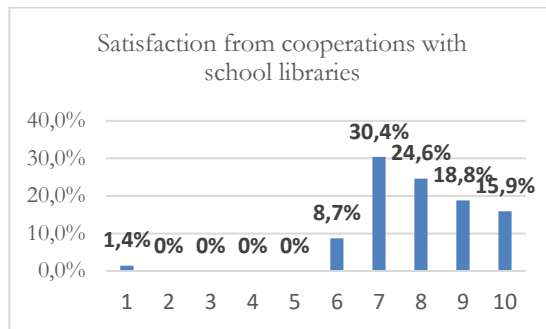
*Graph 9b. Satisfaction from cooperations with school libraries*

In the third and last part of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to express their opinion on the areas of extroversion and promotion of the services provided. So the following graph (Graph 10) gives a clear impression of the value of social media in the modern era and their contribution to promotion (social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, twitter, YouTube, or recently tik-tok).
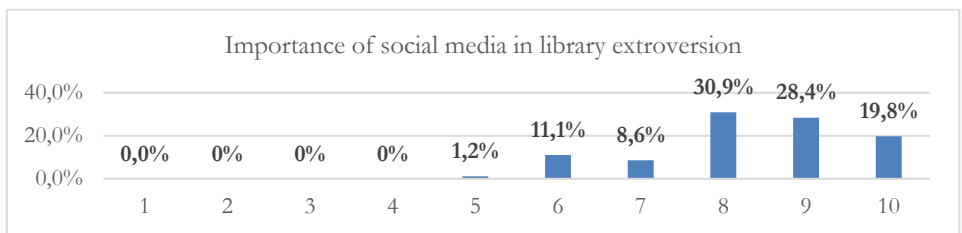
*Graph 10. Use of social media to enhance extroversion*

The majority of participants give a very high score (8.33 with a maximum of 10) on the value and role played by social media, regarding the strengthening of the extroversion of each library and the promotion of its actions and partnerships towards the community surrounding it.

This was followed by the question whether the library where the individual works, implements any information literacy program, something that has already been commented on the recording of the current situation in terms of cooperation between municipal libraries and schools. The answers, as can be observed, are 50-50, with a slight precedence towards "No".
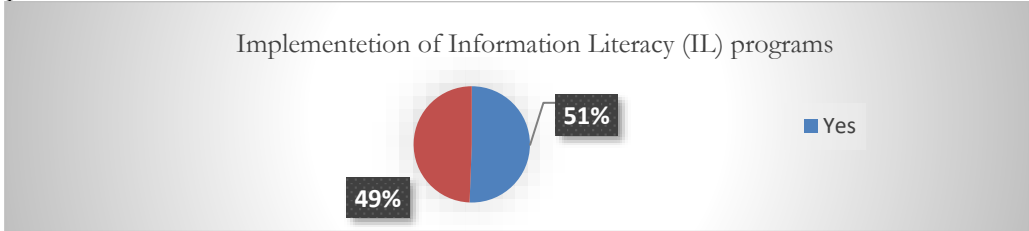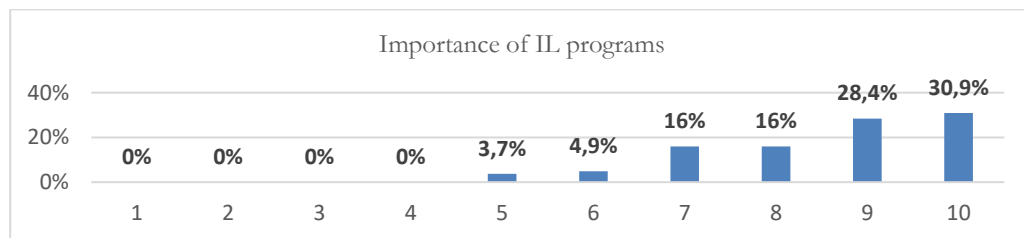

Graph 11. Municipal libraries and information literacy programmes implementation

For those who responded positively, an additional question was given. They were asked to report the age groups to which the information literacy programs are related (Graph 12). In the following graph, it is clearly observed that information literacy programs mainly concern children up to 18 years of age (78.6%), something proving that municipal libraries can significantly strengthen children's cognitive skills both in primary and secondary education. Next age group is that of adults (14.3%), post-student (4.8%) with supplementary educational programs, and the last one is related to information literacy programs for the refuges.
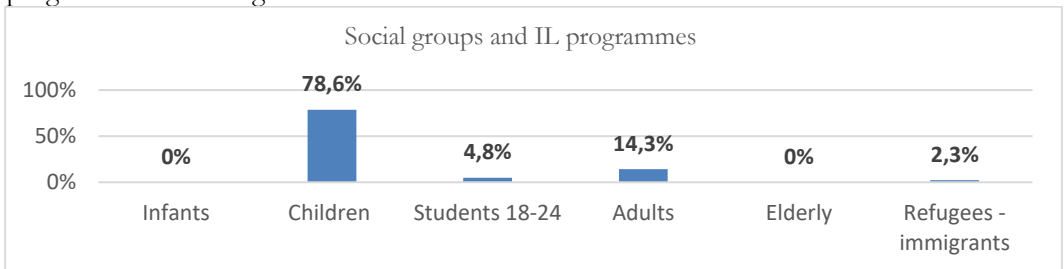
Graph 12. Social groups and IL programs

The last part of the questionnaire covers the opinion of the participants on whether they believe that the implementation of information literacy programs is an important service of their library (Graph 13). Responses ranged from a scale 5 to 10 with the highest grade of agreement at 10, giving an average of 8.53. Through the last graph, it is clearly shown the need for training and strengthening of all educational activities, with the assistance of municipal and public libraries, since they offer the know-how to implement such an action.

Importance of IL programs

0%	0%	0%	0%	3,7%	4,9%	16%	16%	28,4%	30,9%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Graph 13. Value of information literacy programs

5. Conclusions

According to the manifesto of IFLA and UNESCO[6] in 1994, every municipal library constitutes a distinct local information center, an "information hub" that unites the informational needs of its users with high-level information services, through know-how and the correct and objectively documented information that is able to provide. It could be described as the "local gateway" leading to knowledge and providing the basis for lifelong learning and the development of critical skill.

In the light of the 21st century, Greek municipal and public libraries should no longer be considered as a privilege of the intellectuals or as book and/or academic paper warehouses. It is high time that they became an integral part of the community that surrounds them. They could be described as "hubs" of providing services and promoting skills development. They could also evolve their operation through various collaborative models.

In this article, an attempt has been made to depict the current state of Greek public and municipal libraries concerning their outward orientation. Furthermore, an effort made to establish a connection between the libraries' extroversion and how sustainable they are, examining whether extroversion affects sustainability. The results of the survey indicate that extroversion significantly affects the sustainability of public and municipal libraries in Greece, in several aspects, such as the footfall by patrons and fundings, which are two crucial parameters of libraries sustainability in general. Furthermore, actions such as collaborations between libraries or other cultural entities (such as museums) have a huge impact on libraries sustainability and concurrently enhance their extroversion. This fact is reflected in the survey, regarding the satisfaction of librarians when such collaborations arise. Finally, concerning the existence of information literacy programs and their potential influence on extroversion of municipal libraries, the results indicated a correlation, as librarians themselves consider information literacy a valuable tool for promoting outward focus.

The vision and the belief in the values of each library constitute the basis on which it can develop. Collaborations with other cultural agencies, the partnership with the school community, its connection with local agents in search for sponsorships and the dynamics provided by the scientists' knowledge as a means of support for vulnerable and socially sensitive groups constitute basic elements of its existence as well as its motive.

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[6] McGuire, C. (2022). The 2022 IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto at a Glance.

The role played by the professional librarian himself is of paramount importance. Introversion is the main feature of this profession, but with the various collaborative models mentioned earlier, even this outdated image of librarians can change.

In Greece, some efforts are being made in order for the municipal library to acquire a more institutional role in society. In several cases, this has already been achieved with great success. However, the operation of a municipal library as an educational, intellectual, cultural and recreational center, should be constantly protected with continuous actions and efforts that relate to this vision, while at the same time the librarians should themselves demonstrate initiative and innovation (Mukhuty, 2022). That's the only way that municipal libraries will be able to ensure their sustainability on a socio-cultural level. Knowledge is power and libraries know how to handle this.

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