

Friend libraries: opening doors, connecting lives

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I like metaphors. In this matter, I disagree with my fellow citizen Víctor Moreno, who thinks that metaphors about reading twist and simplify its true meaning. He dedicated a whole essay to this topic (*Metáforas de la lectura*. Lengua de trapo, 2005).

Even though I try to stay away from grandiloquence, I find metaphors useful for describing reality and bringing it closer to the word. Even when I talk about reading.

Amongst all the reading-related metaphors, my favourite is the "door". I brought twenty of them to Jumilla, in order to share them with you, as I find yours widely open for me.



Illustration: Leena Lumme. Finnish stamp.

In my opinion, if we dig deeper into the metaphor, a library is just this: an open space in a closed environment; an exit, a possibility of change, of meeting and communicating beyond the walls; the threshold of many dreams, an option of accessing knowledge.

1. A door to the future?



Image: samizdat

I refuse to believe in a future made only by machines.

It is true that the Internet has opened another door: one which opens into a new age of information.

It is also true that electronic reading can bring about obvious profit; it would be senseless and mean to turn our back on all the possibilities of the digital library. Here there is also a horizon, even if we can only sense it through the cracks.

2. Knockin' at heaven's door



Image: Christo Komarnitski (<https://www.elance.com/s/komarnitski/>)

...because there is a gap keeping us from that door. Reserved entrance. Difficult to access for the public. No entry without password.

3. Intercom



Book-O-Mat, 1949. LIFE.

On the other hand, this situation seems to question the face-to-face services of the library. As automation advances (auto-loan machines, virtual catalogues, distance reference services...), the usefulness of the librarian (and that of libraries, of course) is called into question. Personnel reduction, uncared customers... the human dimension of libraries is excluded.

4. Out of its hinges



Image: Dave Coverly.
<http://personal.rhul.ac.uk/uhra/026/homepage.html>

As a consequence, we, the imaginative librarians, go crazy trying to design new and innovative services that could keep our status as an invaluable resource.

5. A door to yesterday



Métiers d'antan

les Frères Carron, inventeurs de la roue carrée

Imagen: Les frères Carron, 1889. Autor desconocido. Tomada de <http://zorg.blog50.com>

Anyway, the square wheel was invented long ago. It proved to be of no great use because of its limited spinning capacity.

Innovate... yes, look for an answer for the user... that too, but, at any price? We shouldn't forget our essence: reflection, ideas, words, dialogue, meeting...

6. Open doors

What will be our thing in 2029?

The same as now. Opening doors. Communicating people. Offering HUMAN VALUE to society.



Imagen: Youngs at Library. Fuente: wikimedia.

7. Doors on (round) wheels



Image: Biblioteca móvel em Olinda, Pernambuco, Brasil.
Flickr. Author: Prefeitura de Olinda. CC BY

Bringing books and reading close to those who face the greater difficulties in accessing them.

The library must be an opportunity to come near information and culture.

8. Door to door



Image: Post cycle Cologne
Wikimedia. Author: ProfDEH. CC BY-SA

Also a channel through which we can communicate our individualities: those of the author and of the reader, of yesterday and today, of remote cultures...

9. On the inside



of close loneliness...

Image: Forbidden Books, Alexander M. Rossi. Public domain.

10. Door shut in our face



The library can work as shelter after the door-slams, an open hand after rejection and exclusion.

Image: free-stock-illustration.com

11. Secret door



The library can reveal secrets unheard of, help us to dream...

Illustration: Sir John Tenniel, *Alice adventures in Wonderland*. 1865. Public domain.

12. Open Sesame



It can teach us magic words which move mountains and clear the way to the great treasure.

Illustration: Edmund Dulac for *Rubáiyát* (Omar Khayyam).
<http://www.gutenberg.org/>.

13.



Image: Secret Garden Door. Wikimedia
Author: Hannahlucy100. CC BY-SA

It can also fill our head with questions

14. The temple of one thousand doors

The library will only continue to be "a library" if we remember that it is much more than "a place where we keep a considerable amount of books in a specific order for reading".



The library achieves meaning only through its readers, through the life experiences that its resources and its work can bring about.

The library is just a starting point, but if it plays its part the right way, it can turn into the best driving force for development.

Image: The Doors of Dublin. Author: Tim Sackton
CC BY-SA. Flickr.

15. "Open the door and leave"



Image <http://www.obsessyourself.com/author/admin/>

After three years of living in Spain, Alejo had been fired. He was shocked by the news, but decided to start working right away and looked for support in the library. He browsed some books about active job searching and, for some weeks, he saved some time each day to look for job offers in the newspapers and to send his CV left, right and centre from one of our computers. One day he told us the great news: he had been hired by a supermarket. Kept in a file, our own librarian's contract shined in a new glitter, as if its batteries had been fully charged.

I'm sure that many libraries can tell similar stories. The library can reach so far that even us, the librarians, are surprised.

16. Door opener

On a Monday, a man called Jose requested the loan of a book when the system popped up a message: "this user has already reached the maximum number of loans." When we told the reader, he answered:



Come on, I'm starting my house arrest and I'm saving up on something entertaining...

Obviously, nobody had anything to object.

Author: Mehdi Mohammadi Rouzbah. <http://www.donquichotte.org/>
International Book Cartoon Contest winner.

17. Opening our ears



We don't need complex tools in our jobs: empathy and interest in knowing can be our best allies.

The Library of Burlada, next to Pamplona, has a special multicultural service directed to immigrants. Everyday, Thomas swings by to read his country's newspaper and to meet some fellows from his country. One day, he discovered amongst our new acquisitions an Oliver Mtukudzi album. That day the distance between Burlada and Zimbabwe was cut off by several thousands of kilometers.

Its also our duty to stimulate that interest, that curiosity for the other one. The same as other youngsters in Pamplona, Mikel, Alejandro and Erika were surprised during their high-school visit to the library. Right after they arrived, the librariand played a rap song, followed by really loud heavy metal.

Image: samizdat

Then, when she asked them were could those bands come from and everyone answered "USA", she told them that the rap band was from Senegal (Daara J: Boomerang) and the metal music was brazilian (Sepultura: Roots). They also couldn't have imagined that those comics which told stories about young people their age were made in Iran or in Ivory Coast.

18. Door of dignity

Sometimes, libraries are born to human solidarity. Just as there are readers willing to fight the administration to avoid the closing of some libraries (unfortunately, we observe this situation with rising frequency), there are also some supportive groups who set up popular libraries in order to be prepared for the financial crisis.



Archive Fundación "Gizakia Herritar".

Carmen is one of the volunteers of the community kitchen "Paris 365". Every week, Carmen (and many other collaborators), serves one-euro dishes to people without resources who have signed up. For her, it is a matter of social justice.

Even more, now, on Wednesdays, she goes to "txoko", a space for recreation and training which has nothing to do with the community kitchen and which strives for social inclusion and the empowerment of people. There she helps the IT technicians of the cyber-center, but her main task is to assist the library team.

Little by little, they are ordering the books that have been given to them (around one thousand) and have set in motion a reading club consisting of both users and volunteers. It's a pleasure to see how they exchange their viewpoints. Among equals.

19. Glory's gateway



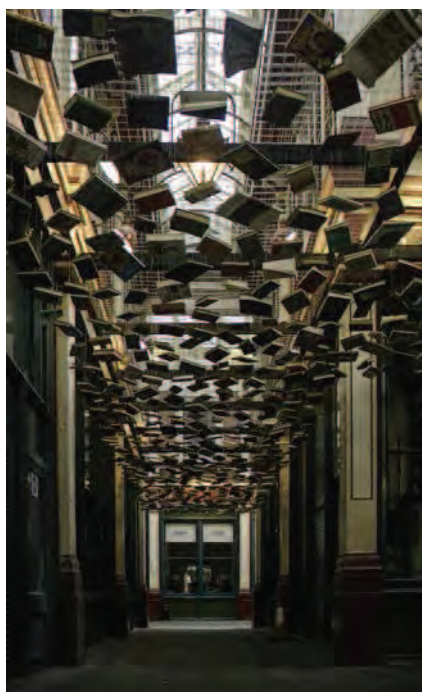
I love being a librarian. It's a very human job, it allows you to be close to people, and people are always interesting. Because of that, you sometimes see wonderful, heartwarming scenes that make you feel glory.

Ignoring the rentability criterion, that week we decided to answer affirmatively to the request of a clearly minority book. After informing the requesting user, we recieved the next answer:

*There are fateful days,
There are pits of desperation,
There is bottomless sadness,
There are oceans of "hidromurrias".
There is ice and there is mist. And the ash in the cup we must drink up.
And then there is you.
I fell a very hairy urge to hug you,
to take you to Venice,
to make a silver badalchin for you, to shout...
Thanks.
(It was, of course, a poetry book)*

Image: Psyche, John William Waterhouse, Harris Museum. Public domain. Wikimedia.

20. Libraries: widely open



There's not much to add.

I wish that in 2029 John Connor will be waiting for us with a poetry book in his hands.

I wish that by then the machines will just be tools designed to make our existence easier and warmer.

I wish that we will be able to keep the human and social aspect of libraries.

See you all in the future (in a while, I mean).

Image: Booksky. Author: Atropos91 CC BY-NC. Flickr.