Public Libraries and Lifelong Learning

Literature review

Elisabetta Bovero

MODULE BP 100

MA/MSc Information Studies
University of Northumbria – Newcastle
Università degli Studi – Parma
Summary

Executive summary.................................................................p. 3

1. Introduction........................................................................p. 4
2. From the Information Age to the learning society...............p. 5
3. The concept of lifelong learning........................................p. 6
4. The role of libraries in lifelong learning............................p. 8
5. The impact of Information Literacy on lifelong learning........p. 11
6. The role of the information professional in learner support....p. 12
7. The Italian case.................................................................p. 15
8. Conclusions.......................................................................p. 18
9. Bibliography......................................................................p. 19
Executive summary

This literature review examines the role of public libraries in supporting lifelong learning (LLL).

The first part considers the impact of recent economic and social changes in the field of education. Thanks to official documents, the paper tries to answer the question on how is it possible to transform the information society into the learning society? The new learning culture is largely described besides focusing on the concept of LLL.

The second part describes the themes related to the new role of libraries and librarians involved in LLL services. When public libraries, between the 1990s and the 2000s, are recognized as the pillars for a democratic knowledge society, the position of the libraries in the communities changes, thanks to cooperation and new partnerships into the formal, non formal and informal education system. Besides the infrastructures, the networks and the provision of services, libraries offer neutral and supportive local learning settings. As demonstrated by the experiences in the field of Information Literacy, guidance and training constitute the strategic value of libraries.

In order to achieve the democratic goals of an inclusive society, libraries have to pay attention to their public and to the different needs of their users. This new scenario ask librarians to become agents of change, prepared to meet the new demands of technology and, moreover, of people. New information professionals need new qualifications and professional recognition, into a perspective of a lifelong career.

This study dedicates a part to the Italian case, in order to understand the state of the art of the role of public libraries in LLL in this geographical area and comparing the situation with that of other European countries.

The final part offers a recognition of the main trends and problems
related to the role of public libraries and LLL. In some areas it is evident a gap between the international policy and the current practices.
1. Introduction

If the earliest ideas about the possibility to learn lifelong date back to the 17th century, when Comenius (in Longworth & Davies 1996) stated that “no age is too late to begin learning”, during the 20th century the importance of LLL increased dramatically. Political, economical, technological factors solicite a cultural change, with the focus on education, from cradle to grave. This learning revolution has been completed when, beyond traditional institutions (schools and universities) other organisations were included among the deliverers of education and training and when the perspective went from teaching to learning.

The role of libraries in LLL is widen recognized from the 1990s, from policy, library associations, etc. Concerning this, however, there is a big difference between English speaking countries and other nations. Different traditions in the field of librarianship play different roles. Only in the countries where the services, the users, their needs and their satisfaction are the pillars of the library, information professionals are costantly involved in information literacy programmes and recognize the importance of LLL. In contrast, where the library services are weak, because the tradition is focused on books and their storage or because the economical conditions are severe, librarians have difficulties in applying policy of LLL.

This literature review gives a large space to the official documents (especially from UNESCO, IFLA and EU), with the aim to order, from a general view, different approaches. The topic of libraries and LLL in fact has became really widespread and the practices applied are numerous. The opinions of the authors collected reveal, indipendently from the experience, a large sharing of some principles, related to the relationship between the library and the learning society: the role of the library in the community, the social and cultural impact of the activities on users, the strategic position of cooperation, the focus on librarians as agents of LLL.

In order to analyse deeper a field, academic libraries are deliberately
excluded from the review, eventhough in some papers they are cited, especially because cooperation is central in the policy related to LLL, where all kinds of public are involved, students included. The overview on the topic provides a large amount of information, revealing that libraries and lifelong learning is a cool topic in the current debate about the social role of libraries in the Information Age.

2. From the Information Age to the learning society

The recent economic and social changes are contributing towards the rapid transition to a knowledge-based society, where development, competitiveness, technology and equity are strictly linked. European Commission (1995b, p. 2) argued that:

“The internationalisation of trade, the global context of technology and, above all, the arrival of the information society, have boosted the possibilities of access to information and knowledge for people, but at the same time have as a consequence changed work organization and the skills learned. This trend has increased uncertainty for all and for some has led to intolerable situations of exclusion.”

According to the same EU strategies (1995b, p. 5) the major challenges to cope with are:

• demographic trends that increase life expectancy and change the age structure of the population;
• the substantial rise of working women;
• the expansion of technical innovation in all areas that generated new knowledge requirements;
• changes in consumption patterns and lifestyles.

The Information Age implies, as a matter of fact, an economy based on the creation and the sharing of information and faster and easier access to information by a wider range of media (computers and telecommunications). This information revolution (and explosion) requires
technological, organizational and social changes. Only who has the ability to handle information, giving meaning and adding value, can transform information into knowledge and then into power. Change in technology, economy, demographics, population and employment build a new approach to education and training. Establishing the learning society will depend on how the institutions will provide effective learning for personal development and for growing up, fighting against the information-poor environments and the digital divide. In the Information Society education becomes an individual right for the personal development and it is necessary for the economic growth and the employability. Otherwise, as summarized by Tammaro (2005b), in the context of the knowledge society people need more mobility, increasing skills, qualifications, training, in order to assure a continuous development of competences. Only learning how to learn and becoming independent learners, people will be able to handle the new competencies required.

3. The concept of lifelong learning

The first focus on permanent education dates to the UNESCO Conference on education in Montreal in the 1960s. For the first time, education is clearly recognized as a process that goes on family and school, involving all fields lifelong. Otherwise, permanent education is an important aspect of the fight against illiteracy. In the 1970s, Faure (1972) reveals the necessity to create partnerships among formal, non formal and informal learning, in order to assure to all the right to learn lifelong. In the 1990s, the European Commission (1995a and 1995b) publishes two strategical documents in the field of education: the Green Paper on Innovation and the White Paper on Education and Training. The White Paper puts the individual in the centre of the learning process and it recognizes the importance of basic competences, besides technical and social skills (such as creativity, responsibility and group working).
Summarizing these developments, Brown (2000) states that:

"The original UNESCO concept of lifelong education, as expressed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, was based in the humanistic tradition. That tradition saw increased education as a mean of equalising individual earnings, linked education reform with social demands for greater opportunity and emphasised personal fulfilment. Greater equity in educational opportunity was seen as a major levelling force in society. It was democratisation through education. The current version of lifelong learning is different. The key 1990s reports on lifelong learning are influenced by a broader mix of economic, employment, social, cultural and educational objectives reflecting the uncertain and rapidly changing contemporary times."

The first Global Conference on Lifelong Learning was held in Rome in 1994. After the European Year of LLL, in 1996, conference agendas in Europe promote a large debate. The European Commission (2001), with *Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality*, relates employability and active citizenship to self-accomplishment and social inclusion. In order to realize these strategies, it is stressed the importance of working in partnership, with the aim to offer quality in learning and to share roles and responsibility among public authorities, employers, unions, institutions of formal and non-formal education, associations and the same individuals. The most particular aspect of the discussion is the interdisciplinarity. Richini (2002, p.1), for instance, points out that “developing a system that supports lifelong learning implies establishing links between a number of highly diversified learning areas, thus opening up opportunities for combinations and synergies not possible in one institutional setting.” The implication of a learning attitude to spread over the lifespan designs a new approach of the governments. So Richini (2002, p.1) concludes that “policies should respond to the main challenge of giving all people a fair chance, and equal opportunities and access to learning throughout their lives, and not allow lifelong
learning to become a mechanism that reproduces inequalities.”
In sum, the clearest and most comprehensive definition of LLL is the one offered by the European Council (2002, p. 2), in the resolution of June 27 on LLL: “LLL must cover learning from the pre-school age to that of post-retirement, including the entire spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Furthermore, LLL must be understood as all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective. Finally, the principles in this context should be: the individual as the subject of learning, highlighting the importance of an authentic equality of opportunities, and quality in learning.” LLL is different from permanent or lifelong education, because the perspective in the first case is on the learner, in the second case on the teacher. LLL has a social impact, promoting equal opportunities and fighting social exclusion, with special reference to disadvantaged and excluded groups. Besides this social mission, LLL is also related to all types of learning, independently from the employment, the job, the career. Making people active citizens, LLL shows its cultural mission too. From the point of view of the Information Society, according to the *Prague Declaration* of the Information Literacy Meeting of Experts (2003), LLL assumes the role of a “basic human right”.

4. The role of libraries in lifelong learning

If LLL is the product of partnerships, which is the role of libraries?

The Copenhagen declaration of the first Pan-European Conference on Public Libraries in the Information Age (in *Something for everyone: Public Libraries and the Information Society*, 1999) considers the role of public libraries within the emerging Information Society and supports the following key roles:

- democracy and citizenship;
• economic and social development;
• lifelong learning;
• cultural and linguistic diversity.

According to the same document “public libraries provide, through their widespread distribution across Europe, a cost-effective infrastructure for lifelong learners and easy access to the content of the virtual networks. They also support students at all levels of formal education.”

If the Copenhagen Declaration can appear a sort of European through analysis of the previous Public Library Manifesto (Ifla/Unesco, 1994), one year later, the European Commission (2000), in the Memorandum on lifelong learning seems to forget the role of libraries in LLL.

What are the consequence in the world of libraries? The same 2000 is a crucial year: IFLA managed a project on the role of public libraries in lifelong learning and Peter Brophy, of the Manchester Metropolitan University, edited The New Review of Libraries and Lifelong Learning. At an international level, libraries are required to become agents of social change, moving their mission towards a strong social responsibility, so IFLA (2000) proposes that:

“In a society of lifelong learning – whether of a formal or informal nature public libraries will be nodes connecting the local learning setting with the global resources of information and knowledge. Public libraries must therefore be allowed to play a role of fundamental importance in the development of future systems of lifelong learning. The development of the information and communication technology has already laid the basis for the creation of information networks, giving users even of small local public libraries access to the world wide sources of information. The public libraries also offer guidance and training in information search and quality rating of information sources. Thus, public libraries are necessary if not sufficient prerequisites for a democratic knowledge society.”

If, as admitted by IFLA (2000), “the most modern and well-equipped
library is not necessarily the most developed in the art of stimulating popular participation and democracy”, what does LLL constitute, in detail, within a library? The implications of LLL in public libraries are wide. From one hand, if public libraries (and librarians) aim to play a more strategic role in LLL, they need to become active partners in educational systems. From another hand, as stressed by the cited document of the IFLA, the consequences can touch the strict identity of the library: the shape and design of reading rooms, as the collection management, as the professional profile of the librarian etc. In conclusions, IFLA (2000) recommends to cover four different areas:

- library and educational policy;
- co-operation between the library community and the educational community;
- the need of change in public libraries;
- the need of change regarding professional profiles.

The same themes are present in *The New Review of Libraries and Lifelong Learning*, where articles of quality from authors from English speaking countries analyze the relationship between the potential of libraries and the issues of the learning society. The journal collects reflections and projects, especially from UK, where policies financed and supported nets and specific plans.

In 2001, in *The Public Library Service: IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development*, chapter 3 (IFLA/UNESCO (2001), pp. 29-30) is dedicated to “Meeting the needs of the users” and LLL is recognized among services to users. According to the guidelines (IFLA/UNESCO, (2001), p. 29), the public library can carry out LLL providing educational support and study facilities, but also “a range of materials on a variety of topics which will allow people to follow their interests and support their formal and informal educational”. The double face of formal and informal education is confirmed when public libraries are described as the places where,
thanks to access to the Internet, it is possible to support distance learning or where “the aim is to provide a neutral and supportive environment in which individuals can learn at their own pace” (IFLA/UNESCO, 2001, p. 29).

The same IFLA (2000a and 2003) enlarges the perspective of LLL reflecting on the role of public libraries promoting literacy. IFLA (2003) suggests libraries “to be aware of the cultural and political realities in their country in determining ways to develop appropriate literacy programs and providing motivational support to learners”, stating that the analysis of the social and economic context can transform LLL into the “continuing process of learning for those that go through literacy programs”. According to the IFLA (2003) Section on reading, LLL is even the product of literacy, because people who practice reading, writing and numeracy skills, develop independence, curiosity, LLL.

Furthermore UNESCO (2001) explains that “literacy is a fundamental human right, a basic learning need, and the key to learning to learn”. In conclusion, while “literacy helps construct and reinforce lifelong learning for all”, libraries, besides home, classroom, workplace, community, play and sports grounds, are listed among “adequate and stimulating literate environments [...] essential to literacy acquisition, development and use.” If literacy is possible in a lot of places, policy recommends libraries to take advantage of co-operation to promote literacy, as expressed in one of the general objectives of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012) by Abid (2004): to “improve the co-operation between government officials, researchers, educators, librarians and media practitioners”.

On another hand, recent evolution of technology and telecommunication can help to promote literacy and add a further topic in the field of libraries and LLL.

Brophy (1998) notes that the approach of libraries in the organisation of learning has to recognize that there are many variations. In the case of
public libraries, there are these possibilities: distance learning, open learning, work-based learning, independent learning. Another important key is the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the delivering of interactive learning materials and the recognition of the importance of a real-time supporting infrastructure thanks to the Internet. Concerning this, Brophy (1998, p. 32) recalls however that “learning is essentially a social process” and that “the key to successful use of technology in lifelong learning lies in designing packages and support from the perspective of learning, not from the viewpoint of technology”.

The European Council (2001), in the resolution on e-learning, widens the perspective and stresses that digitalization and standardization can facilitate the access to the cultural heritage of libraries, museums and archives, in the educational perspective. The experience in cataloguing and in satisfying users’ needs put the libraries at the centre of this process, coming back to the identity of libraries related to documents, information and people.

In summary, the aim of public libraries, according to IFLA (2004a, p.6) is “to play a more active role in lifelong learning and to establish tools for libraries and librarians to become active partners in the educational systems.”

5. The impact of Information Literacy on Lifelong Learning

According to the American Library Association (1989), “information literate people are those who have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, how to find information, and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them. They are people prepared for lifelong learning, because they can always find the information needed for any task or decision at hand.” The strict relationship between LLL and Information Literacy (IL)
is confirmed by the IFLA (2000b): “Lifelong learning contains of various forms of education and training, formal and informal [...] Within all these forms of education and training, there is a necessity of working methods developing the ability to search for information and develop knowledge actively and independently. The classroom and the traditional textbook must therefore be supplemented by archives, libraries and museums, institutions offering a broad choice of different media and professional guidance in information search.”

Recent vision confirmed in IL the basis for LLL. Bundy (2004) notes that IL is a part of independent learning, which is a part of LLL. While Abid (2004), during the IFLA conference in 2004, wishes “an effective information literacy programme for the whole society ... delivered in two parts: one as part of the formal education, and another as part of an informal education, in course of, and as part of, the day-to-day activities and life of people.” Abid (2004) adds that “information literacy initiates, sustains, and extends LLL through abilities which may use technologies but are ultimately independent of them”. The debate about LLL and technology is summarized by Andretta (2005). She affirms that in Australia and USA, the lifelong learning agenda identifies the priority on IL, while the UK perspective on e-learning is often based on ICT skills. Therefore, the paradigm of user education, especially in UK and Scandinavian countries, as states by Brunelli (2006), exploits into the learning resource centre where technology and information are as important as the learning setting, which is learner oriented.

The last orientation about IL and LLL, expressed by the IFLA Guidelines explores analogies and differences. First of all, IFLA (2006, p.12) recognizes that “these two modern paradigms should ideally be harnessed to work symbiotically and synergistically with one another if people and institutions are to successfully survive and compete in the 21st century and beyond.” Therefore IL and LLL are inter-related because the two concepts are both self-motivated and self-directed, self-
empowering and self-actuating. They both improve the set of personal choices and options, the quality and utility of education and training, the prospects of finding and keeping a job, the effective participation in social contexts. In conclusion, IFLA (2006, p.13) states that while “IL is a set of skills that can be learned ... in contrast, LLL is a good habit that must be acquired and accompanied by the adoption of a positive frame of mind. The willingness to change and a curiosity or thirst for knowledge are very helpful pre-conditions to lifelong learning.”

6. The role of information professional in learner support

If the impact of the digital divide depends directly from social class and home access to information technology, libraries cannot limit their strategies implementing computer provision. Barbara Hull (2001) considers the ongoing change in the role of librarians and stresses the implications for the education of future librarians: more relevant as facilitators than custodians. In order to fulfill this role successfully, the author recommends a high degree of sensitivity to the effects of such variables as gender, age and social background on their clients’ interactions with information sources. Hull (2001) continues that librarians “must be well informed on [their] clientele’s background and capabilities”. One year later, Hull (2002) points out that “the growing role of the librarian as teacher/facilitator/fellow explorer of new information” makes important good interpersonal skills, as indicates also in the project of the Library and Information Commission (1998b) Likely to succeed, especially for the staff/customer interfaces. Hull (2003) therefore links public library policy to social inclusion, stresses the role of alliances and suggests that “whatever the community they serve, all information workers shoud strive to be in tune with the broader aims of that community”. In UK librarians distinguish library users by social classes, in order to understand if the library facilitates social inclusion. Too often, as
recognized by Muddiman (2001), “public libraries are, at present, only superficially open to all”, if they “provide mainly passive access to material and resources and they have service priorities and resourcing strategies which work in favour of existing library users rather than excluded or disadvantaged communities or groups”. The same study recognizes “that public libraries have the potential to play a key role in tackling social exclusion, but ... they will need to undergo rapid transformation and change”. These transformations regard both technology and people. For instance, McInroy (2003) considering the integrated approach to the provision of ICT for LLL, economic and social improvement, focus both on the developments of e-government and training, rooted in the requirements of the community. In this connection, Hull (2002) recognizes that “there are many challenges remaining to librarians as deliverers of lifelong learning”: they need to remind people that they are expert in their field; even in this electronic age, they deal with people (clients and colleagues); furthermore alliances can improve their prestige and influence.

The attention on the social impact of libraries, links LLL to different or special public, as disabled people, or the elderly. As denounced by Suaiden (2003) in Brazil, “information professionals are ill-equipped to be agents of social inclusion”. In different areas some projects tend to favour different public, as in the case of the population living in both urban and rural communities, described by Bennett (2004).

Besides the study of the public, often special sections, or activities are identified as crucial for the social mission of the library. In this field, Moyer & Weech (2005) analyse the education of public librarians to serve leisure readers. It is clear that the link between public libraries and LLL focuses on the competences and the motivation of information professionals.

In terms of management, if the need of change in public libraries has to be directed towards the empowerment of users, librarians, as points out
by IFLA (2004a, p. 3) “will have to change and adapt to new demands, professional tasks and working conditions. [...] A climate should be created in which even the shyest person feels able to ask for help without being judged inadequate. We need more research and knowledge about how libraries and the professional profiles of librarians should be designed in order to improve their preparation to meet the new needs and demands directed towards them.”

The theme of the professional development of librarians, related to LLL, has been widely explored also by the special IFLA section on Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning, borned in 2002. During the works of Oslo Meeting, Walton & Thompson (2005) reflected upon the application of the theory of situated learning within library and information services, linking pedagogy and androgogy and highlighting these new skills necessary for librarians: partnership working, brokering, evaluation, information packaging.

Spacey & Goulding (2004) working for the Biblio.for.mEDA project, funded by the European Union with the aim to investigate the role of public libraries in LLL, survey resources, support and staffing. Their results are particularly interesting in the field of skills needed by staff, according to the opinion of managers. Besides the emphasis on ICT skills or information retrieval/handling, managers agreed on “people skills” such as approachability, patience and diplomacy or communication skills. Staff needs also mentoring, training or teaching skills. Other areas of training identified include customer care, cultural/disability/equal opportunities and confidence.

Moreover, thanks to the vision of librarians as LLL agents, it is recognized the need of change regarding professional profiles. For instance, the recent IFLA (2006) guidelines recommend to librarians to take part of LLL team, together with other agents of the learning community (teachers, faculty, parents, students and society in general), in the mean time they also recommend to be aware of learning theories. Concerning this,
according to IFLA (2006, p. 32) librarians “should refocus their work to train individuals in information searching and use, rather than on just source location and retrieval. However, the instructional role imposes a challenge: librarians need to train themselves to look for opportunities to learn or enhance their learning facilitation skills”.

The last implication of librarians and LLL relates their career. As argued by Blair (2000), the notion of lifelong career is seriously changing, so the new paradigm for libraries and librarians will be based on adaptation and innovation. If career development is an individual responsibility, especially when most professionals will work outside traditional organizations, training will be particularly based on motivation. Therefore Hull (2002) recommends librarians, as reflective practitioners, to conduct, publish and disseminate researches. In conclusion, Tammaro (2005c) points out that the combination of formal, informal and non formal education and training of LLL, needs a reconsideration of professional recognition and quality assurance processes.

7. The Italian case

While in UK, as stressed by the Library Association (2001, p. 6) “lifelong learning is probably the single most important tenet of the Government’s agenda”, in Italy there is a lack of documents and actions as those of the Library and Information Commission (1997, 1998a-b, 2000) or the Department for Education and Employment (1997, 1998). The framework shows the perspective of the employability and sometimes education, often ignoring the social and cultural sides, in terms of self-development. In 1997 CTP (Permanent Territorial Centres) were created by the Ministry of Education for formal education for adults and nowadays there are 546 centres. The recent regional law of Emilia Romagna (2003) about the equal access to lifelong knowledge integrates formal education, school, professional training, adult education, distance learning and new
technologies, with a specific article dedicate to LLL, as a tool to foster the
extension of knowledge, specific competencies at work and in social life,
with particular attention to the full development of citizenship. Adult
education programmes can be realized by different institutions, especially
in partnerships (schools, universities, professional education agencies,
associations, third age universities, centres of non formal education). But
the regional law does not mention libraries.

The national Italian policy generally tries to promote inclusion and
employability through LLL which is never considered in terms of
participation for self-development. The key of the different perspective
on LLL between UK and Italy can be recognized in the concept of
8), LLL “is seen as essential in creating a participative democracy and in
encouraging personal development within a social context”. British policy
involves personal growth, access to opportunities, support for learning
and learners, the use of ICT and the need to join a range of initiatives.
The same document of the Library Association (2001, p. 8) argued that
“implicit within the lifelong learning programme is the de-
institutionalisation of learning: distributed, off campus, in the community
and in the workplace”.

Getting back to the subject, which is the role of the italian libraries in
LLL? Unexpectedly, in 2000, the agreement among Government, regions,
provinces and councils on the reorganization of permanent education for
adults cites public libraries among the learning agencies (Italy.
Conferenza unificata, 2000). In specific, the ISFOL survey (2003) shows
that Italian libraries do not perceive an educational attitude, while they
prefer a cultural role. Nevertheless the answers of the questionnaire
given by more than 100 public libraries shows that libraries are very
active in the field of non-formal education. The study relates the mission
of libraries in LLL to the IFLA/Unesco (1994) Manifesto for Public
Libraries. According to ISFOL survey (2003, pp. 86 and 112), Italian
public libraries promote ICT literacy, furthermore they represents meeting places for large parts of the society. Libraries, in collaboration with cultural associations and local councils, often manage projects of education for adults, courses of foreign cultures and languages, workshops, conferences, exhibitions, bibliographies. Eventhough Italian libraries are not specialized in offering formal courses, they often develop reading strategies, promote their heritage and offer significative occasions of growth from the cultural, social and personal sides. The peculiarity of libraries is the long tradition in offering activities in the field of LLL: 66,5% of the libraries of the sample are active from more than 10 years (only after museums, universities, ONG). Isfol study (2003, p. 168) concludes that libraries, besides other non formal structures (as popular universities and cultural associations), are a part of the 50% of total structures that offer LLL and this is a good starting point for future collaborations and nets.

Focusing the librarianship field, the contributions are few, as a signal of lack of policy and practices. A typical Italian approach tends to invest of importance only the technological side of LLL in libraries, ignoring the human and social side. Concerning this, Tammaro (2001) argued that, in order to create a real Learning Resource Centre for adults, multimedia resources are not enough: the service is mainly based on facilities and qualified staff. Brunelli (2006) agreed citing the CREMISI (2000) project and the plan for the creation and the development of libraries in the schools, where, nevertheless, the technology prevails on the learners and their educational needs. The extension of CREMISI project, ABSIDE (2004), part of the European Community Programme Equal, is devoted to help people with work problems, using the libraries and their staff as tutors, in order to support this disadvantaged users.

As stressed by Galluzzi (2005), in Italy there is a big distance between librarianship and social science: only from the 80s the culture of the service has been introduced in the management of libraries, despite up
till now a lot of libraries work in isolation from their context (librarians, decision makers, users, suppliers, other libraries, etc.). The purpose of Italian libraries is too often oriented to the management of collections and books, with all the procedures related, while the analysis of the users, their needs and the restrictions to the usage of the services is not very widespread.

As commented by Tammaro (2005a), using the data of the survey of the IFLA on lifelong literacy, nowadays in Italy the focus is on technology in spite of users, as confirmed by the lack of coordination, qualifications and training around IL.

In conclusion, the Italian learning scenario, is very similar to that German described by Lison (2005): the character of public libraries as centres for learning, information and culture does not fit in any structures of national administration; the concept of LLL is not taken into account adequately; adult education institutions act mainly not co-ordinated; formal learning is more accepted than other forms of learning; policy papers do not mention libraries as institutions supporting LLL activities. Therefore, as stated by Gómez Hernández & Pasadas Ureña (2003) for the Spanish scenery, also Italian public libraries must face these problems:

- the long-lasting tradition of selfishness and unwillingness to co-operate of all learning facilitators;
- the lack of awareness about lifelong learning and its benefits for society;
- the lack of facilities, equipment and resources for public libraries;
- the lack of training and updating of all types of LIS professionals.

8. Conclusions

In conclusion, we can assume the definition of LLL offered by Brophy (1998): "lifelong learning is a deliberate progression throughout the life of an individual, where the initial acquisition of knowledge and skills is
reviewed and upgraded continuously, to meet challenges set by an ever changing society”. Into an education system where both formal and non formal environments are included, the value of libraries as places of LLL, especially in English speaking countries, is often recognized. For instance, Tyerman (1996, p. 25) notes in LLL one of the main strand of her vision about the future of public libraries. Their function as practical enablers of independent, lifelong learners will be emphasized.

According to IFLA (2004a, p. 3), the major positive aspect of LLL is that it “dissolves boundaries between traditional policy sectors”: education, labour market, industry, sociology and culture. This common responsibility for lifelong and life-wide learning put the libraries in a new position into the learning society, but, in spite of the powerful resources that they can offer, until LLL will be largely defined as formal adult education, libraries will be not recognized, always according to IFLA (2004a, p. 9) “as a forceful tool in LLL process”. Policy, co-operation, need of change for libraries and librarians represent the core problems related to the role of public libraries in LLL.

Researches demonstrate that technology is not enough, so they insist on the need of change, because ICTs have to be linked with new educational systems, new partnerships, new users. In order to obtain this and to tackle social exclusion and the digital divide, the learning revolution will not involve only users, but first of all the information professionals that, as agents of change, have to transform their libraries in learning organizations where all members of staff need continuous qualified training and where professional development is promoted.

In summary, the topic of libraries and LLL is becoming increasingly strategic in everyday librarianship. Now it is necessary a real shift of interest from English speaking countries to others.

9. Bibliography


ALa. American Library Association (2003c) Mission and Goals of the School
Library Media Program. Excerpt. Available at:
http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslproftools/informationpower/missiongoals.htm
(Accessed: 8 May 2004)

ALA. American Library Association (2004) Guidelines for Distance Learning
Library Services. Available at:
http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/guidelinesdistancelearning.htm

ALA & AASL. American Library Association and American Association of School
Librarians (2003) Standards for initial programs for school library media
specialist preparation. Available at:

Andretta, S. (2005) ‘From prescribed reading to the excitement or the burden of
Information Perspectives, 57 (2), pp. 181-190.

solo statunitense?’, AIDAInformazioni. Rivista di scienze dell’informazione, 19
May 2006).

11-17.


Biblio.for.mEDA. Biblioteche per l’educazione degli adulti (2004) Available at:
http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dis/disresearch/biblio%20web/index.htm

Big Blue (2001) The Big Blue: information skills for students. Available at:
http://www.library.mmu.ac.uk/bigblue/bigblue.html (Accessed: 20 August
2006).

Blair, L. (2000) ‘Beyond the square: career planning for information professionals

Brophy, P. (1996) Open Distance Learning in Public Libraries. Luxembourg:
Office for Offical Publications of the European Communities.

Library Services in the context of Lifelong Learning: Final Report. JISC. Available
at: http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/services/elib/papers/supporting/pdf/ukals.pdf


IFLA. International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (2004a) *The Role of Libraries in Lifelong Learning. Final report of the IFLA project under the Section for Public Libraries*. Available at: www.ifla.org/VII/s8/proj/Lifelong-


***