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The Never People: reaching out to non-users in our communities

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Abstract

This paper tries to show the development of a network of a Popular Public Library in a rural area as the small town of General Villegas in the province of Buenos Aires, in Argentina is. Although it was founded in 1935, it was not until the eighties that it started its strategy of reaching out to new users such as children. Now at the beginning of XXI century it continues working with different publics, a new building is being built to satisfy its increasing activities and to conceive the library as a permanent learning site equipped with the latest technology. Also this new stage is led by the total quality philosophy. And for the challenge of contributing to achieve equity, taking into account different publics and sustaining a social policy which allows the access to modern technology to those users deprived of these benefits.

1.-History and location of the Public Library of General Villegas.

General Villegas department is located 500 km far from Buenos Aires city, it has about 30.000 inhabitants, half of them live in the city and the rest in the rural area and nine small villages with 300 to 2.000 people. It has primary, secondary schools, a tertiary institute of teaching education, and an Open Education Municipal Center. (CEAM) that offers university degrees careers as well as postgraduate courses through Internet, satellite and tutorial classes.

Agriculture and cattle breeding are the main activities as well as dairy farms. It has a modern oil factory, of multinational capitals but just only 30 people work in it. Jobs are mainly related to teaching activities, commerce and public jobs.

The Public Library "Domingo F. Sarmiento" was born as a popular library on 25th August 1935, as the result of the needs of the neighbours. In the sixties it lost its legal capacity, and it was closed. At that moment it had 2.000 volumes. Its bibliographical files were abandoned and many books lost. In 1966 the local authorities took it over and appointed a commission to be in charge of it.

The library served the public in different rented buildings till 1983, when the Municipality authority opened a special building built for that purpose, where it is now. But soon, its huge growth during the years 1983-1998 when Susana Cañibano was in charge of the library, turned this building small, so a new and modern space is being built now.

Unfortunately the early disappearance of Susana Cañibano in 1998 was a shudder for all the community. Her silent work went beyond. She had transmitted her passion for the library work to all the people that worked with her. She had not been selfish when teaching others how to run a public library. During the working period of Patricia Bargero, since 1998 up to now, the Library has gone on working hard with old and new activities as well.

At present the Municipality, our local authority, is leading an improving policy of institutional quality and the Library is part of it. In General Villegas today the public libraries are part of culture and education. More than a government policy, what this process is leading is an state policy. Although different traditionally opponent administrations as the "Radicales" and "Peronistas" have passed, the Public Library has always been financially supported.

The Public Library of General. Villegas is special, because it is not only Public, but Municipal and Popular as well. Through the frequent crises that Argentinians are used to endure, this healthy combination of public and private institutions makes possible its long existence. The Municipal authority is in charge of paying salaries (18 employees) and looking after the building. The Commission Support of the Public Library is in charge of getting resources for the acquisition of update information material and for workshops related to reading promotion. The Library has also the support of CONABIP (National Commission of Support of Public Libraries), the Province of Buenos Aires Direction of Libraries and the National Teacher Library.

2.- The Public Library Vision

As Alejandro Parada says "evoking Susana Cañibano is to combine the passion and the unconditional love for Public Libraries. It is also to imagine the small and fragile figure of a human being who thought that being a storyteller was the highest pleasure in life. Evoking Susana is to participate of the miracle of seeing an extended hand offering the book to the reader: an act not worthily praised by our consuming and pragmatic society". (PARADA, A., 1999)

Susana was not just a storyteller, her rigorous academic preparation melted all the library organization, from the selection of the material, the information process, the attendance to public, registering the daily readers movement, organizing extension activities, training people for working in the library, the administration and even the evaluation of the system. In 1983 the only person in General Villegas with an university degree in Library Science was Susana.

Susana "was an explorer and adventurer of her community. A person who knew that the real revolutions are those that make human beings tolerant and democratic, the revolutions that make no noise". (PARADA, A. 1999). Expert on the reality of our "pampa" (vast plain), with little librarian development, and because she was born there, she always had in mind the librarian

profession, hardly known by teen-agers. Her goal was to study Library Science in Buenos Aires and return to her mother town and to sow libraries in the rural area. In just fifteen years of her management nine public libraries were created, developing a real net in daily contact through messengers, phones, and periodical visits in spite of distance and bad muddy roads on rainy days.

In the paper prepared by Susana in 1991 entitled "Public Libraries" and presented in homage to Domingo Buonocore she remarked the obstacles that stopped the development of these institutions: a) lack of professional librarians; b) lack of conscience of local authorities and of the Library community as a social service; c) lack of librarian legislation: d) absence of librarian planning; e) lack of money; f) absence of a national library system; g) lack of cooperation and integration between libraries; h) existence of out to date collections; i) lack of a good library technical organization; j) unusual role of a public library which covers the lack of other types of libraries, such as school libraries; k) lack of a policy of library extension.

During Susana's management she made it possible, to overcome many of the obstacles mentioned at local level. The lack of librarians: today 10 of the 18 people who work in the library are librarians or advanced students. Local authorities and the community have become aware of the library's role as social service, providing not only material resources but also human resources. Besides she managed to make the collection accessible to different readers. She technically organized the central library as well as the village libraries, improving the net work and the human resources capacities.

Unfortunately at national level it has not appeared a strong personality with enough political weight to lead the ideal of Libraries. The National Library has not been led by Directors formed in Library Science, and they have mistaken the role of a National Library for the role of a Public Library. Federal Law of Education N° 24.195, promulgated in 1993 does not mention school libraries as education instruments. On the other hand CONABIP (National Commission of Support of Public Libraries) does not lead an state politics, because when the government changes, even though among the same political party, their authorities are removed, stopping the development of many programs. These posts should not be political, they should be covered by candidates after an examination for a public post. A national library legislation has not been done yet.

3.- Importance of the Leadership

"Leading people is not the same as managing people. In the face of world leadership crises that the occidental society lives, time has come for local leaders, small human beings that know how to transmit their dreams, their utopias". (BENNIS, W., 2000). Susana Cañibano was an example, she turned the Public Libraries of the department of General Villegas into places that allow us to improve our minds, our life quality, and to offer books to people who had never got in touch with them.

Susana's actions make us think about the conditions that are needed by a librarian leader to hold on a project of this kind, and above all to last for a long time. Because it is very common among our public institutions that when governments change they start again from the beginning. Besides her early absence makes us think about the management role of a librarian. If the person who leads the project disappears, what happens to the service? For this reason it is necessary to emphasize the importance of working in a cooperative way sharing and developing the project with all the staff of the library.

Although leadership is a personal virtue, the development of government institutions leads us to think of working teams as well. The leader " is that person capable of letting out the

liberation, from insight, from the interior energy of other human beings, so that they voluntarily make an effort to obtain the goals meant for their own dignity and for those who they live with" (GENTO PALACIOS, Samuel 1996)

The leadership function in a Public Library may be done through different positions: leadership from the Director Team , leadership of the Commission Support, leadership of the librarians. Without ignoring the working teams, the director or head of the Library emerges as an active and personalized figure in his leading role. And therefore, he is responsible for promoting service quality. The leadership of the director team can be summarized as follows:

- Charismatic: personal-professional attraction that makes other people feel comfortable working with him.
- Affective: kindness and affection of the director when dealing with working people.
- Anticipator: clearly transmit the mission of the library.
- Professional: manage all the aspects for running a library and improving the quality of the service.
- Participative: basic mission of the leader to promote the active participation of all the staff involved in the global library project.
- Cultural: commitment to build the profile of the library from the philosophical conception
- Formative: promote continuous training among the staff to improve the service.
- Library management and pedagogic function: to introduce activities thinking of the challenge of alphabetization in traditional and computing information. (GENTO PALACIOS, Samuel 1996)

4.- Mission and goals

Mission: the mission of the Sarmiento Library of General Villegas is to develop reader citizens capable of searching, selecting, using and producing information on their own about different materials. And to socialize information and cultural assets through different strategies that involve the active presence of the community, making special emphasis in the promotion of children and youth literature, regional history and the work of Manuel Puig, the world known writer born in General Villegas.

Objectives:

- To enable the access to information, in all different aspects and formats to people from different ages and social status.
- To promote critical reading and pleasure reading.
- To turn readers into independent users to manage by themselves in the library.
- To promote literature among children and teen-agers.
- To promote research and the knowledge of local history.
- To teach computing skills to get information.
- To reach out people who can not go to a Library with reading material.
- To work in a cooperative way with other libraries, educational institutions, foundations and the community.

5.- Challenge of the Public Library of General Villegas:

¿how to reach out to non-users?

It was one of the main goals of the Public Library that organized and led Susana Cañibano, to fetch readers and members. "Because she did not believe that children of today read

less than years ago. She did not wait for children to come by themselves to the library. She went for them, she went with interesting books and activities to those children that were far from the library: she organized different courses as handicrafts for mothers, talks about different subjects, workshops about study methodologies and vocational orientation, theatre for children, story telling and book presentations in the chapels, the rural schools, neighbour schools, village schools and libraries. She made different extensive activities: Storytelling Hour, the Visit Program, meetings with writers and illustrators, reading campaigns, crossword puzzles, literature and drawing competitions, building handicraft books. Workshop with teachers promoting reading skills, film debates, homages to the writer Manuel Puig, who was born in General Villegas". (BARGERO, P., 1999)

When the main city was provided with all these services, the library team, mostly teachers ad honorem, thought of strategies to reach out to people in the small rural villages and the countryside. These villages are between 30 to 90 km far from General Villegas city, on rainy days they are of very difficult access because there are not paved routes. Since for these citizens it is very difficult to travel to Villegas, the central library promoted the creation of their own public library. A real net work was created. At present there are 9 rural villages with their own library. Some of them have also got a computer center with five computers, printing machine, scanner, digital camera and access to Internet.

Under the management of Susana Cañibano, the Public Library had an active role, went out and sought readers. Patricia Bargero continued with this work and enlarged the activities for instance, reaching children refectories, parks, the hospital, the police station. With poor children the Library worked traditional stories and created the "storytelling murga" (murga is a street band for carnival). The program "Puig en acción" involves a previous work of literature and theatre workshops, ending with the performance of different plays during the main event where researchers and teachers join to discuss about the work of Manuel Puig.

The Library impelled the creation of the Historical Regional Center in 1983, for research and promotion of the local history through posters, a recreation of the life in the "Tolderías" (leather tent where the original inhabitants of this area used to live) and the publication of the book "Hechos que no se llevó el tiempo" (Facts that time did not take away) (URIARTE; H y CASTILLO, N., 1997)

The Public Library uses the local media: television, radio and newspaper for its different purposes: promoting interesting books, and the activities usually held in the Library.

"These different activities promoted by the library allowed the rural village to feel close to the main city of General Villegas and was a helpful tool of communication. It was possible to enter schools and work with books in a different way, it was the way to present books and promote children literature, almost unknown by teachers. Rural inhabitants had the opportunity to meet national writers and illustrators to exchange ideas and work with them." (BARGERO, P.1999)

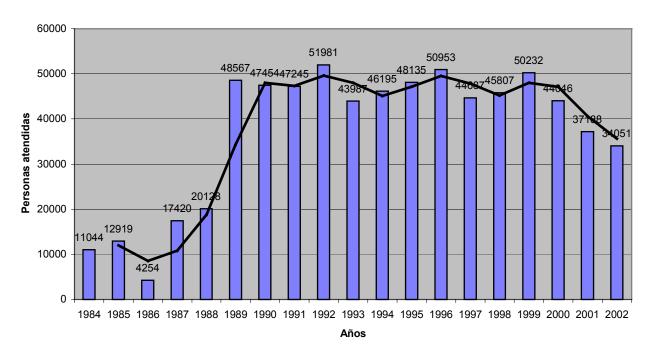
6.- Tools: inquiries and statistics

"In many opportunities coldness of statistics does not say much about the individual role in the development of the institutions. In the case of Susana numbers talk by themselves. When she took over the library in 1983, it had 8.000 books; and in 1998 it had 32.500 books and 1000 videos: an unbelievable growth of heroic characteristics". (PARADA, A.)

Today, in 2004 the library has: 38.410 books, 1264 videos and 325 CD and CD Roms. The membership number reaches 2.100.

Reference and Lending Service

Servicios de referencia y préstamo



Before her absence Susana with other companions of work had prepared a first manuscript of a book about their experiences in the Public Library which starts by analyzing statistics: "From the year 1984 to 1989 they had noticed many differences in the annual statistics regarding the evolution of children readers.

The causes had been easily detected: the library was closed during several months because the roof had collapsed during the great flood of 1986, classes started late due to teacher's strikes, the reference service worked a lot, but the lending service did not. Children did not take books for reading at home.

There were some figures that they could not explain. There were also external causes:

- Absence of elder people as a reader model.
- Lack of school libraries in the city.
- Children with many other activities: English, sports, computer science.
- Television addiction and video games. At that moment there were 7 video clubs, 2 houses of video plays and 20 television channels.

Across the Public Library there is the Institute María Inmaculada (IMI), the only paid school. At that moment it did no have a school library and the membership fee of \$2 did not seem to be an obstacle for working with those children in the public library and books could be lent.

The previous year the library had made a small promotion campaign but the results were not what was expected. The library had a very good children literature material, spaces in the local radio and newspaper. The only necessary thing was to make a plan and use all the instruments and possible strategies". (CAÑIBANO, S; HERRERA. M.; FOGAZZI, M., 1998)

This pilot experience with this school was extended to the rest. The impact was so favorable, that users asked an extended timetable. Therefore more librarians were employed.

Up to now the use of statistics has been made on the base of the amount of daily readers. With computers the statistics analysis becomes easier. In the case of Villegas Public Library we do not have an automated management yet. However there is a register of the number of people who use the reference and lending system and attend extension library activities. Obviously this is not enough. Data must be correlated.

On the other hand the reading of statistics must be done within a strategic plan of library evaluation. Patricia Bargero in the year 2003 made an inquiry to measure the impact of the Library services in the community. Our purpose is to organize this information through software commercially known as SPSS Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

Applied statistics is today a tool that helps to get the knowledge of a complex library reality, including not only analogical but virtual libraries as well. Both of them working together with potential users different to the traditional ones. Today we need to correlate different variables such as readers, types of reading texts, level of education, sex, which require the use of a statistical advanced methodology.

The development of human behaviour sciences has an application of statistics in areas that affect the individual and collective welfare, meaning that the research studies must "satisfy certain canons of truthfulness, stability and objective criticism, without them the exercise of intelligence turns into a chaotic wandering between news and sensationalism". (KOHAN, N; CARRO, J., 1970)

Using statistics in library science tends to develop different ways of logical thinking. Using mathematics propositions urges the researcher to explain scientific suppositions, to define concepts, announce propositions and if necessary to make up suitable methodology for the study of a library problem.

The use of statistic in libraries is not new, it is already suggested in law N° 1420 of Common Education (8 July 1884) in chapter VII: Popular Libraries. But not in the present Education Federal Law N° 24.195 of 1993 where libraries are not mentioned.

But why statistics in Library Services?: just for simple curiosity? Because it is an imposition, or as a tool for taking decisions? Today statistics is a tool for evaluation. It serves to compare, to see how many citizens of the total inhabitants use the library services. It is a very strong tool for the adequate library running and the improvement of service quality.

7.- Quality management, EFQM model and ISO rules

The quality management programs were firstly developed in the business area, and now they are already used in educational services and in some libraries. "The quality concept is generally confusingly used. This confusion is caused by the common aspects that share the terms Total Quality, EFQM Model, ISO 9001.

- <u>Total Quality</u>: it is a philosophy based on values that seek excellence in all the management dimensions.
- <u>EFQM</u> (European Foundation for Quality Management) it is an organization which has devoted itself to make tangible the principles of Total Quality so that they may be applied to different organizations. To achieve such idea, this Foundation has developed a model of quality management.
- <u>ISO 9001</u>: it is a rule developed by the International Standard Organization to ensure quality systems of the organizations.

The Model intends to make tangible the philosophical principles of total quality. A model is not a rule, and applying it does not mean to obtain a certification by third parts. The rule establishes a series of obligatory requirements that an organization should fulfil to certify quality. Nevertheless an organization may follow the rule as a model without asking for the certification. In this aspect EFQM and ISO 9001 are very similar, and they can even complement each other". (LAMAS, A., 2004)

According to the mission of the Public Library of General Villegas: the following strategies are developed:

- To create the necessary conditions for the readers and for the employees of the institution to feel comfortable working in teams and encouraging them to be competent and to get involved in their daily activities.
- To explore the needs and expectations of users, public and private institutions through a fluent communication, offering an agile, dynamic and flexible service.
- To develop a Public Library with autonomous management, applying the philosophy of quality, with technologically updated equipment and facilities.
- To offer accurate and objective information of the internal management.
- To ask users for suggestions about the service to evaluate and improve it.

"One of the keys of the process which has quality as a goal in the service is the collaboration and people commitment with continuous improvement. That process is fundamental and requires new attitudes based on pro activity and the disposition to collaborate and innovate. It is not group work, it is team work and, it is something different: the commitment, the involvement and shared objectives must give signs of identity". (LAMAS, A. 2004)

To promote a process of improvement towards quality, besides commitment and definition of the quality policy through the mission and the strategic plan, it is necessary to propose the self evaluation of the library. In that case different forms may be chosen, a model or a rule. Even though EFQM model may be used as a model of self evaluation it may also be used as a management model, since it is based on total quality philosophy applied to the management of an organization. However it is the Library itself which should define the working way.

In this fourth period of consolidation of the Public Library of General Villegas the possibility of applying a quality model is being studied, such as the EFQM (European Foundation Quality Management) for service institutions as the library is. A model is a simplified description of a complex reality to be understood, analyzed and improved. The EFQM model has as its principal aim to help business and service organizations to know themselves better, and consequently to improve their function.

"Requirements to develop the model:

Every organization, beyond the reference Foundation must count on:

- a purpose or reason of existence Policy and strategy
- someone who conducts the organization-leadership
- social subjects that manage diverse activities process
- human resources and materials". (LAMAS, A, 2004)

At the same time organizations tend to obtain final results. In a public library, the results are immediately visualized, speed at getting information in the shortest time. In the mid and long term the results are: to train autonomous searchers, selection and production of information in different formats, and the enjoyment of good literature as well. So the results may consider:

- not only final results, key results
- but also results in the satisfaction of service users
- results in the staff self satisfaction

- results measured by the impact of the organization in the community.

The EFQM is a no normative model, whose central concept is the auto evaluation based on a detailed analysis of the management system fundament of the organization, and as a guide of the model as well.

The systematic use of the EFQM model, by the Public Library of General. Villegas will allow a better planning based on objective facts and a common vision of the goals to reach and tools to use.

"The model outline may be resumed in this way: any organization has—should have- a purpose or reason of existence (political and strategic), someone who "pulls the wagon" (leadership), manages several activities (process) and counts on human resources (persons) and materials (resources). All of them make the agents.

Organizations try to obtain final results, no matter the type. However the achievement of good results is conditioned in the long term, by the fidelity of the users of our product or service. So the results should consider not only the final results but the results of the users of the service. In the long term it is also very important the performing of people and the impact of the organization in the society. The EFQM consider that results must be measured in all these aspects". (LAMAS, A., 2004)

ISO 9001 is a rule, by means of which a third institution certifies the quality service. In Argentina it is being used by enterprises such as ARCOR, specialized in sweets, and the use of this tool allowed it to obtain international quality certifications and reach international markets. (LAFAYE, H. 2000)

In the field of librarian institutions "The National Teacher Library" has developed "Carta Compromiso" (Commitment Letter), pointing out twenty four services to evaluate, its standard, its indicator and what is measured. Besides they are translating the ISO rules and their next goal will be to become a certificator agent of quality in librarian management.

Quality studies have become generalized in different organizations, others than business organizations, researchers in education (GENTO PALACIOS, S., 2001; ÁLVAREZ FERNÁNDEZ, M., 2002) taking the EFQM as a model made several adaptations for educational institutions. In Argentina PH D Ana María Lamas has studied and validated the model used by Gento Palacios.

Next challenge of the Public Library of General Villegas is to study and apply this tool. Our organizations are too dependent on persons and not as much on systems. The ISO rules help to provide the service institutions with a system and offer a method to document and manage the process in the institutions and ensure such process through an external certification.

"The assurance system includes a group of documents that set the way to do things. This does not mean that this way of doing things can not be modified, on the contrary it should be permanently improved to be faithful to the total quality philosophy. The basic types of documents are: quality manual, proceedings manual and working instructions". (LAMAS, A., 2004)

The Public Library of General Villegas has not only increased activities, but employees and complexity of the management as well. For these reasons tools of this kind are fundamental to go on existing and keep alive the passion for readers and for the community which it serves.

8.- Projection of the Library towards the future in response to present problems.

Latin America lives in permanent contexts of crisis. Argentine used to be a country with a strong middle class and with a homogeneous school system, with equal opportunities, but unfortunately at the beginning of the XXI century it has turned its function into assistance, many schools today have mainly become children refectories.

Which institution can raise today the ideal of social integration?

"In Latin America the Public Library must contribute to achieve equity, taking into account different publics and sustaining a social policy which allows the access to modern technology to those users marginated by society". (RODRIGUEZ G., 2001)

Today Library staff play the role of teachers, not only teaching how to use information but skills, strategies and competences that users need to manage in an autonomous way as well. The problem of lack of attention so usual in classes, does not happen in the library. Usually these readers come with a problem to be solved, if they find a teacher-librarian in the minute they need to find what they are looking for, they may learn much more than in their 45 minute class when attention is vague.

To learn how to learn in the world we have to live today, it is necessary to have very good tools of learning. Multinational enterprises privilege having a Master Degree done in the Open University of Great Britain or in the National University of Distance Education of Spain, in their future employees curriculum vitae. To have obtained a postgraduate degree in these centers of high level studies implies that they have self discipline, they are constant in what they start and can solve problems on their own, using technology.

It is not longer an obstacle to continue university studies or post-graduate preparation for those who are far from big cultural centers and live in small villages,. On the contrary it may be a great advantage for they have enough time that inhabitants of great cities do not have since they waste lot of time commuting from one place to another. Inhabitants in small cities can take advantage of time studying at distance.

This methodology needs to develop competent documentation centers. Not only being sources of up to date information files in any of their types of analogical (paper) or digital format, but critical and creative of new information as well.

For that reason the role of the "Libraries: tools for Education and Development", title of IFLA's Congress 2004 in Buenos Aires it is today re-categorized. Today our world does not need an educative system orientated towards the maintenance of the status quo nor even ivory towers of specialized learning, what it needs are flexible and functional educational places where children, teen-agers and adults can be in touch with conceptions and ideas relevants for its present and for its future.

In this new step the Public Library of General Villegas is going through, its role will be of a learning site, to continue working intensely and collaborating with schools and teachers of the district and with the Open Education Municipal Center (CEAM). To promote reading in different contexts, to take the author to readers, to turn the library into a meeting place and enjoyment of knowledge.

Automation of data basis and circulation of material will be emphasised with the help of a technical expert who will train librarians so computers and digital technology work all the time. Technology plays today a fundamental role, it is indispensable to be connected to Internet and to

have computers of public access that work accurately. For that reason it is important to have technical support.

Future building of the Public Library.

It should be:

- Flexible: with facilities, structure and services easily adaptable to different situations.
- Compact: to permit the easy circulation of users, employees and documentary materials.
- Accessible: from the exterior to the interior, and to every area of the building.
- Extendable: to allow a future growth with minimum alterations.
- Varied: in the collection of documentary material and in the services to the users.
- Organized: so that users find what are they looking for.
- Comfortable: to attract and to keep users.
- Constant temperature: for the conservation of the material and for comfortable conditions for users and employees.
- Safe: to exert control on users' behaviour and the collection volumes.
- Economic: to be built and maintained with a minimum of financial and human resources. (HAYLOCK, J. 1992)

Purpose of the Public Library in General Villegas:

- Permanent learning site.
- Promotion of reading and writing skills in paper and digital support.
- Promotion of the creation of new documentary supports such as video, CD Roms, Web pages.
- Invite authors to meet readers.
- Place of meeting and enjoyment of knowledge.

"The real challenge for the public library is to abandon the comfortability of being with privileged people who already know about its services, and to reach that other portion of community, which does not know that these may serve them for something, or even worse which does not know about their existence". (RODRIGUEZ, G., 2001). In General Villegas during these twenty years of hard work one may say that almost all the community knows the services of the library. Of 15.000 inhabitants in the main city, about 40.000 annual reference consultations in the reading room and 20.000 persons to their extension activities are assisted. Perhaps the future challenge for the next years is to work with marginal people, specially with families which are not constant in sending their children to school and wander in the city streets. Library has to think of activities that attract these children, as it has already done with schools, suggesting subjects, varied reading material, workshops. Well today one must work with social assistance, and with these new necessities, to improve life quality.

Our next goal is to have an auto evaluation tool and to obtain a quality certification for the library services offered to the public. Permanent effort not only to obtain better performance and qualify internal process, but to provide effective services according to needs and expectations of users as well.

9.- Conclusion

Paraphrasing Ph D Ana Lamas we wish to finish this paper and rescue the Public Libraries, truly Greek temples of knowledge, the figure of librarians with social, academic and human prestige and sensitive human beings in the face of a world of increasing lack of

humanization. We wish they should be recognized as an information and knowledge professional.

We wish that Public Libraries could be the places to resist social marginalization for economic differences of access to mankind knowledge.

We wish that quality could be a goal and a professional way, of the highest humanistic value. For users, our users to be constructors of a better civilized world, for an Argentina with hope.

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