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***Beyond “Worth their weight”: Valuing libraries and library advocacy in The Netherlands***

The idea of having more focus on issues as (Social) Return on Investment from (Public) Libraries, on (Added) Value and on setting up an Advocacy Program for Libraries (of all kind) grew over the recent years, let's say from 2004 (in fact, it started during the TICER Course on Return on Investment for Libraries in June 2004) till now.

Several people got involved in these discussions and, on distance, we hold contacts with many others, in the Netherlands, but also abroad. We also kept good track of the many surveys on this subject in USA, UK, Australia, Germany a.s.o., mostly on public and national libraries, often resulting in comparable findings, often with astonishing facts and figures. And we got more and more convinced that this should be done in the Netherlands too, but also, that this could deliver new methods to report to society on performance and outcome of the library businesses.

All those discussions and thinking resulted in a “Meeting of Minds” in Utrecht on October 28, 2008 and in the concept of a Utrecht Declaration to start a Forum on Library Advocacy in the Netherlands. Drs. Maria Heijne is one of the sponsors of these initiatives and she suggested us to present a paper on the IATUL conference in 2009.

We foresee that these subjects might bear real important developments in the years to come. If we only look at the severe cost cut downs in USA at the moment, we can be sure this financial crisis will hit all libraries all over the world. So new business tools like advocacy, performance, making added value visible a.s.o. could be the best (if not, the only) way to survive as "The Eternal Library".

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