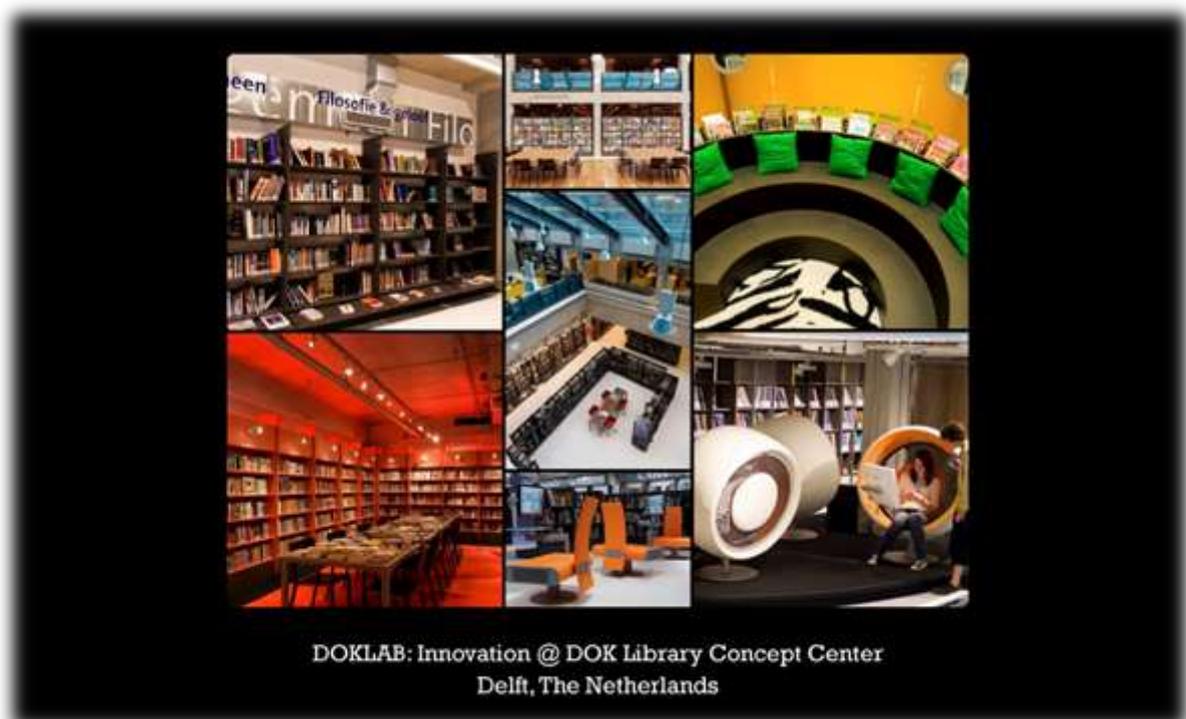


Erik Boekesteijn

## A culture of innovation at DOK and Doklab

*In the Netherlands, in Delft, a medium-sized town (100,000) just a little below sea level stands a library that at first glance may appear to be just a regular public library, but how special it is! DOK can best be described as a media center that combines three unique collections: Music and Film, Literature, and Art. The outstanding collections, together with the expertise of the staff, are the basis for the flow of creativity and energy that inspires the inhabitants of Delft. Together with one other branch library, DOK Voorhof, DOK serves 80% of the population. It is the most frequently visited public institute in Delft. More than 500,000 people annually visit DOK, and every kid at school is a member. The motto "Borrow the World in Delft" truly sums it up.*

*In this article, I'll explain the way we view the mission of DOK and Doklab, and I'll introduce you to some of the innovative projects we've done.*



### DOK's mission in the changing world

The mission of DOK is to become and remain one of the most advanced libraries in the world and to be a living room and community hub. Using creativity and technical innovation of Doklab, DOK endeavours to be an indispensable source of inspiration for its members, visitors, and partners in the city of Delft, in the Netherlands, and in the world. In this way, DOK hopes to safeguard access to the independent, objective, free flow of information that is essential for democracy now and in the future.

## **Doklab's mission is to connect people to stories**

We do this by developing storytelling tools: solutions that will help connect people and technology in an accessible way, based on stories. One of these projects, The Heritage Browser (providing heritage material to libraries) made use of multi-touch technology. It soon became clear that this was an ideal platform for telling stories with digital content as it is both accessible and highly interactive. This technology also makes for a pleasant experience for every conceivable target group.

Doklab combines global knowledge of libraries, museums and archives with the intuitive world of technology, interaction design and the indispensable art of software development and implements this in DOK and libraries around the world.



Besides products such as the Heritage Browser and Book Buster, Doklab is frequently asked for consultancy by other libraries in the Netherlands and around the world. A good example of this are the Extreme Library Makeovers. Doklab also works together with famous architects such as Zaha Hadid, Mecanoo Architects and Stewart & Hollenstein on the design of new libraries.

Society is changing rapidly. Communication is faster and easier than ever. The migration of people and the growing population make society more complex. Information is available 24/7 on different media, search engines, chat sites, and peer-to-peer networks. In fact, there are more cell phones in the Netherlands than there are people.

People often have several digital identities that give them access to their own digital domain. We are faced with more questions than answers, and no matter how clever the search engines may be, this offers opportunities to libraries.

## **Keep, make and share stories**

Well, that sounds good, but what makes DOK a “library concept center”? The first thing we had to let go of when the three collections merged into DOK in 1996 was the idea that the medium we lend out determines what we are. What does it matter whether we share our stories in the form of a book, a CD, a DVD, an MP3 player or MP3 file, or a work of art?

We can expect that the world of our children's children will be completely different. Perhaps books will be treasured in museums or at home but the library may only have digital information carriers. What we do know is that people will always want, love, and need stories.



### **The library as a story publisher**

In order to be able to keep, make, and share stories in this day and age, when rights and privacy are the subject of debate, DOK thinks it is essential that librarians start to think about publishing their own content. That is why a number of Doklab projects deal with this issue.

One of the biggest projects we're working on is an application that will soon be launched and that enables people to bring their own content and add it to collections and themes on multi touch tables and screens. This way it is possible to present an exhibition of whatever you, as a patron, think is important and of value to the community.

#### **About the author**

*Erik Boekesteijn is Founder and Director of Doklab. His work has always been about libraries. First in the music department ( discOtake ), then in DOK, the library concept center in the marketing and communication department, after that in the innovation department and now as co-founder and director of Doklab.*