Work Group 1: illiteracy

Most important conclusions:

- There is illiteracy of all kinds: basic illiteracy, functional illiteracy, media illiteracy, lack of language skills, and it is not going away automatically. This might be a sobering message for political leaders, because not withstanding our well-developed educational systems there seems to be a more or less stable percentage of functional illiterate people in our society. It will remain on the agenda of (public) libraries.

- Concerning media literacy: we should not be confused between being handy with new technology, and having good cognitive skills to process information and develop knowledge. Being handy with tools might be a talent of young people and it is a good idea to get them involved in helping older people to cope with new technology. So, the role of teacher and pupil could become interchangeable: professional staff working with young people to develop their critical skills concerning media and information, and young people helping older people or even their teachers in becoming more handy with technological applications.

- It is very important for libraries to develop there own networking skills, and be able to develop strong partnerships. The issue of literacy demands a broad coalition of institutions and other players to make sure in our society all people get a fair chance to participate and build a better life.

Are libraries a facilitator, a networker or a coach (see handout from the workshop). Conclusion: we should try to develop all three roles. Defining these 3 roles could be a good starting point for discussing what (public) libraries should aim at, and how they can co-operate with other players.