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NORDIC PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN TRANSITION

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Coverphoto: Entresse Library, Finland. Photo: Jorma Waldén

● Nordic public libraries in transition

Development does not happen by itself, it is a result of informed planning, creative visions and determined action. In this issue we have gathered current government draft bills, reports and national policies, there are significant definitions of policy to be presented from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Government reports and national policies interconnect with legislation and state budgets, generally also with state grants and purposeful project support. They are not binding in the same way as legislation, but their impact is obvious.

The strategies of associations and consortia focus on expedient action in the framework of national, regional and local ambitions, and on the more pragmatic needs of their members.

There is always the municipal view, the implementation of policies and strategies in the daily activities of the local library.



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Library plans for a changing society

The interest shown in the role of libraries in society is greater today than for a long time. During the last few years in all the Nordic countries political initiatives have been taken in order to develop national strategies for the public library system.

We can speculate as to the reasons for this increased concern with library policy but it seems clear that developing trends in other areas of society demand fresh thinking throughout the library sector. Libraries must adapt to changes in the community and look for new solutions. They should aim to improve services by better collaboration with local cultural activities, by responding to the community's need for knowledge and by closer dialogue with the public.

Throughout history a constant theme has been that greater changes have never taken place before. The new situation today is that individual countries no longer steer their own course of development but have become part of the global reality. National boundaries have lost their significance. In this process of globalisation we must manoeuvre in accordance with international trends and adapt services to the requirements of the modern knowledge society.

A further important factor which demands fresh thinking is the question of Internet-based services and how we offer these in a digital world of search engines, file sharing and the constant introduction of new communication and knowledge channels such as Wiki, Facebook, tagging, etc. These innovations reveal that the very basis of

library services has been extended by others and that we, the libraries, no longer have a monopoly of access to knowledge put into system. Users can now actively participate in assessing the material we offer.

The new political interest in libraries finds expression in government reports and strategies throughout the Nordic countries. In Finland the government has already initiated a strategy for the public library in the knowledge society 2007-2010 with a clear focus on the development of digital services. This document has been followed by a further plan to update strategies and priorities onward to 2015 so as to adapt them to the social changes foreseen for the future.

In Denmark in 2010 a government committee has presented proposals for the improvement of the public library system by means of interplay between culture and learning and by the development of the physical library together with the use of digital technology. The proposal is to coordinate ICT initiatives among libraries on a nationwide scale by joint access to all library services on the Internet. The report focuses on the question of how libraries can best develop to meet the varied interests of their users.

In Sweden in 2009 a government report pointed towards a more centralised control in order to ensure closer interaction in the development of public libraries. A further strengthening of the role of the regions is also indicated.

In Norway in 2009 two government reports have been presented, one emphasising the role of the library as a cultural arena and the other proposing a large-scale digitisation of Norway's cultural heritage. As in Sweden, the Norwegian reports also stress the importance of coordinating library services and of achieving collaboration at a high administrative level.

The strong Nordic tradition of free access to information ensures a leading position in the task of finding new answers. Professional discussions among the Nordic libraries and the trying out of new projects indicate that we are on the way to creating a new library concept. There is a strong focus on users and their needs, including also efforts to reach out to those who are not users at the present moment. New services based on interaction between the physical and the virtual library are being tested.

There remains also the challenge of being able to provide digital material at the same level as physical books. The demands of offering new content and new services may affect the organisation of the library system and lead to changes in infrastructure. The need then will be to adapt to a new structure while still maintaining the professional expertise which exists in the local library.

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The public libraries in the knowledge society

New Danish report on the strategic development of the new public library is introduced by the chairman of the committee behind the report, director general Jens Thorhauge, Danish Agency for Libraries and Media

The public library is being discussed and developed throughout the world. The basic fact that more and more information is literally 'at your fingertips' forces everybody to reconsider the role of the public library. At the same time needs emerge in the knowledge society, where the public libraries – perhaps – are the obvious institutions to look to for solutions: the need for media literacy and a general need to facilitate the use of knowledge. Also the need for bridge builders at the digital divide is widely recognised.

Despite the fact that intensive work has been going on worldwide in relation to these problem issues and with projects intended to develop new concepts and services, there is no unambiguous consensus as to what exactly the public library of the knowledge society is or should be.

Now Denmark presents a fresh model. In March 2010 the Committee on the public libraries in the knowledge society submitted its report to the minister of culture, who had commissioned it a year previously.

Why yet another report?

The Danish report was commissioned on the basis of a political discussion in the cultural committee of the Folketing, prompted by a large number of closures of public library branches. In

2007 a Danish reform of the municipal structure took effect. The number of municipalities was reduced from 275 to 98. This was i.a. done in order to consolidate institutions, which when put under pressure to constantly develop, may easily fall behind if they are too small to accommodate changes. 'Viable institutions' was a keyword in the reform. The closure of smaller public library branches was therefore clearly part of the foreseeable consequences of the municipal merger. Even so, it surprised most people that in the first year alone 131 out of 681 were closed down.

In the Folketing the minister of culture was put under pressure to take action, but the running of a public library is a local task, and the minister cannot interfere. However, a committee was set up for the purpose of assessing the public library's role in the knowledge society and the need for lifelong learning. The committee was asked to consider whether new concepts are required, whether traditional tasks such as literature dissemination can be developed, and whether the need exists for development of the digital infrastructure. They were specifically asked to consider how the libraries can support the Danish globalisation strategy that aims to create continued welfare and progress in society, i.a. via a massive innovation initiative, through lifelong learning, better educational programmes and research, and greater cohesive force in society. At the same time the minister emphasized that no amendments of the law were desired, no changes in the basic division of

labour between state and municipalities and no proposals that would require extra funding. The mandate is not retrospective – it is not about the branch closures, but about how we should organise the libraries in the future.

State of the art in Danish knowledge society libraries

This task arrives in a situation where Danish public libraries have witnessed considerable changes in usage. The fall in the loan of books and other physical materials is 22% over the past ten years; there is an increase in the use of web-based services, but there are still only half as many digital visits as there are loans of materials. The number of visitors to the library, on the other hand, is stable. 35 mil. Danes walk through the doors to the library each year, more and more people use the library for purposes other than borrowing, but rather to participate in activities there or use materials, Internet and other services. There is an increase in the number of arrangements, including especially IT-learning offers, in the form of mini courses in the libraries and also initial steps in e-learning.

Danish public libraries are right at the front, too, in offering the public access to digital materials. You can download music, films, audio-books and e-books via the library's web site and many libraries offer access to a lot of databases and online services. How much material is accessible varies a great deal, partly from municipality to municipality, partly in terms of different types of

The Public Libraries in the Knowledge Society

Summary from the committee on public libraries in the knowledge society



- Open Libraries
- Learning and Inspiration Activities
- Denmark's Digital Library
- Partnerships
- Professional Development



Jens Thorhauge

material. There are for example not many Danish e-books, but the area of music is well covered with over 2 mil. tracks. At the moment there are only 700 film titles available for downloading, but the number will be growing by about 300 a year from now on. All these services are free of charge and are handled as license agreements. The public libraries have also in cooperation with the Danish Agency for Libraries and Media built up web services like Ask a librarian and a new children's site, which is a narrative universe with all services integrated, a kind of prototype of the digital library of the future.

The commission's strategy

Based on the mandate the committee chose to aim for a contribution to a more distinct development focus based on society's and the public's needs in the knowledge society, the obvious development in the use of the media and best practice in more targeted and inclusive library offers, developed over the past few years and which are outlined above. The committee's analysis of the knowledge society focuses both on new media habits and on a number of the challenges facing the western world, including the new illiteracy which 15% of all young people are hit by, the need to create social innovation,

e.g. in relation to a health system under pressure, which finds it hard to tackle the tremendous increase in new lifestyles and prevalent diseases, the need for lifelong learning, including the continuous development of media literacy. All these major challenges call for a new public enlightenment initiative – one which we do not quite know yet how to organise. But if we can organise the work in the public libraries in a new way, they might well become an essential part of the solution. The break-through in informal ECT learning in the public libraries gives one reason to believe that such a development is possible.

Another circumstance of vital importance for the committee is that Danish libraries have been successful in working out offers more directly targeted at different groups. This applies to kindergarten libraries, book start programmes for children in disadvantaged areas, homework cafés, reading clubs, civic initiatives in relation to minorities, library service in companies, etc. But the bulk of the work is still centred on the management of the collection to which there is free and equal access for all. But the need that is obvious to us concerns the organisation of more targeted offers. In public service broadcasting systematic work is going on with programmes for different segments and we speak about user-driven innovation. It is a challenge for the library to organise the work so that it is based on the needs of different user groups and to define the targets for reaching other than the known target groups.

The committee's recommendations

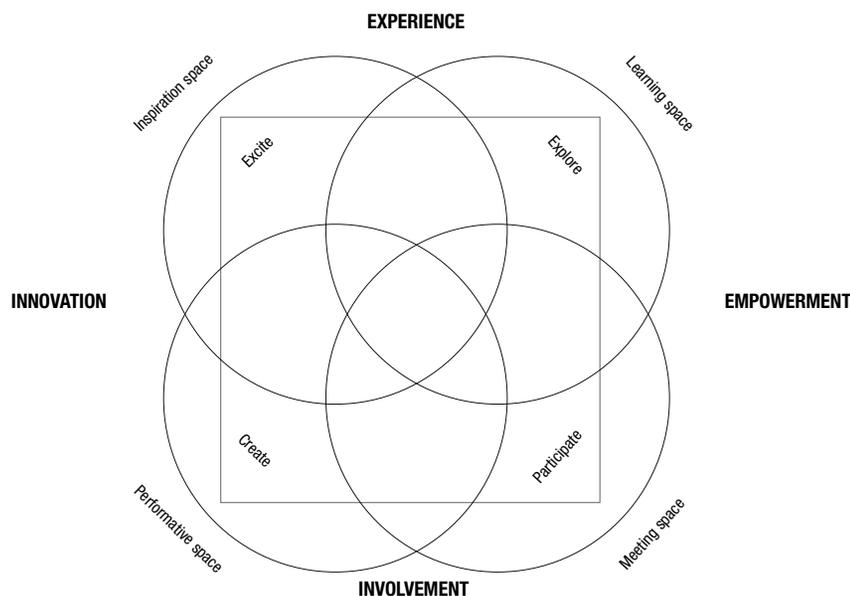
The committee has formulated 22 recommendations grouped under five headings: Open Libraries, Learning and Inspiration Activities, Denmark's Digital Library, Partnerships, Professional Development.

Behind these recommendations there are basically three visions: The vision of open and vibrant libraries, the vision of Denmark's Digital Library and the vision of partnerships as constituent for the method of work in the library that must both support the individual's personal and pleasurable use of the media and society's need for supporting citizens' lifelong learning.

The vision of open and vibrant libraries

The vision focuses on the physical library space. Firstly, most libraries should have longer opening hours than today. We have had experiences with library branches that have been manned for some hours every day, but apart from that are open via magnet cards and pin code, and where a web camera is access to guidance from a librarian. Openness should also be seen in relation to interior design where one should think more systematically in terms of accommodating different needs and target groups. The increasing use of the library for something other than borrowing materials is also taken into account.

A model prepared by researchers at the Royal School of Library and Information Science operates with four spaces in the library: the learning space, the



experience space, the meeting space and the performance space. The general tendency is to operate more with programmed activities than we do today. The learning space offers informal learning activities in the areas where the library has competences, in the experience space there might be films, musical performances or readings and meetings with writers or other artists. In the meeting space the emphasis is on citizen inclusion. It might be a debate with local politicians or other 'topical' people. In the performance space the emphasis is on the participants' own activities and development.

The physical library space has got tremendous potential that can be developed into being a true civic centre with cultural, social and educational activities in a very broad spectrum. But the open library concept also includes the idea of the library being seamless, i.e. moves its offers right to where people are, for example with flexible mobile libraries, with library service in work places, with kindergarten libraries etc.

Denmark's digital library

is the second vision. There is in fact in Denmark a fully developed digital

library offer in all major research libraries, and there are, as already mentioned, many digital services available to the patrons of the public libraries.

The offers are, however, not simple enough to be exploited fully by the public, they exist asynchronously on various platforms, the licenses vary from municipality to municipality and as often as not the digital offers have to be looked for via other channels than the physical materials. Some of the genuine web 2.0 services developed in the libraries must be reached via own portal, a case in point being the popular *litteratusiden.dk*. Today its homepage is the business of the individual library, but there is an obvious perspective in establishing shared development within a three-tier architecture, where the data and application tiers are shared, i.e. organised nationally, while the presentation tier is a local task.

As a consequence, the recommendation is that an organisation be established across state and municipalities, which will be responsible for developing a national digital library with one access to text, sound, images, games, inquiry services, communities and e-learning. The content must be accessible from all relevant platforms, computers, mobile

phones, iPods etc. The library must at national, and possibly also international, level handle licenses for Internet resources that are deemed essential in a public service concept. Finally, access to digitised cultural heritage must be integrated.

The recommendation concerning this organisation form is based of a number of observations. First of all we had to make sure that costly parallel development ceases, and instead ensure development of really sustainable joint solutions. Secondly, the existing digital material in the libraries is not conspicuous enough, a national common marketing initiative is necessary.

Thirdly, coordination within a number of areas – not only the common infrastructure, but no doubt also acquisition of materials will be essential in order to exploit the resources to the full. Coordination and common development are already being looked into, for example the endeavours to establish 'data silos' or 'data wells', which are aggregated library catalogues and metadata e.g. from e-journals or the net music. The earlier mentioned project with a new children's site (see mention in *SPLQ* no. 1, 2010) can be seen as a prototype of the new digital library.

But we lack an organisation and an overall plan for the implementation of



.. social space, digital service, learning, service in the factory, partnerships with TV a.m.o - just a small part of public libraries potentials

the vision. We hope that the recommendations in the report can be instrumental in developing that.

The third vision: partnerships

should be the central axis in the organisation of the modern library offer. The basis for this recommendation is the confrontation with the collection- or product-oriented organisation form in the libraries. The slogan ‘from collection to connection’ has caught on, but practice is often quite another matter.

By partnerships we understand mutually binding agreements on collaboration which will benefit all parties. One should think in terms of partnerships within the obvious sector: cultural, educational and knowledge institutions, but also more broadly in the public sector, e.g. the social and health area. We see a perspective in supporting partnerships with civic society and the market. Examples of the first are the voluntary instructors in the homework cafés and the latter has to do with providing library service in the factory during working hours that is an ongoing project in Denmark.

A completely new partnership with promising perspectives is developing between the libraries and DR, the Danish public service broadcast company. Here the basic vision is not only to get programmes and homepages to inter-

act, but also to follow up on broadcasts with activities in the physical space – for example the libraries. Right now this concept is getting off the ground i.a. in a collaboration on a daily live broadcast from the children’s library in Aalborg, where the idea is that the TV-channel and the libraries agree on a number of themes, which are then dealt with on TV, on homepages and in activities in children’s libraries nationwide.

The libraries face a special challenge in pursuing the classic idea of being where people are – on the Internet. The citizens are to a greater extent on Danish Radio’s homepages than in the libraries, but they are to an even greater extent on Facebook, Youtube and other channels with social technologies. The libraries’ Ask a librarian has just been embedded on DR’s homepage, but this kind of thinking is not being pursued diligently enough.

These three visions can be summed up in one fairly simple concept: In the knowledge society the library must have several strings to its bow: the inviting, inclusive and inspiring library space with a broad spectrum of inspiration and learning activities, the high-quality comprehensive digital library and being on the spot right where people are with an attractive offer: do you need help, do you want to know



more, do you want to join a debate? Click here – and you are right there in the seamless library of the knowledge society.

A realisation of the vision requires professional development and the addition of new competences in the libraries. It also demands a very dedicated leadership and a political backing for the transformation of an institution type, which is quite popular as it is, but which has to change considerably if it is to play the same social role as in previous societies.

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Translated by Vibeke Cranfield

COMMENT

A comment on the Danish report *Public Libraries in the Knowledge Society*

The Heart of the Library

The title in itself, *The Public Libraries in the Knowledge Society*, indicates a distinct line of vision and developmental direction. The connection is not to the experience society or to the future in general, but to overall political strategies for globalisation and innovation.

Whether ideology or pragmatism is to be found behind this important choice, I do not know, perhaps a bit of both. At any rate, the choice reflects the fact that the report from the Committee on the public libraries in the knowledge society was initiated on the basis of two important preconditions: The Committee's recommendations being contained within the frames of present Danish library legislation, and known economy.

The picture of the library presented in the report is in good keeping with international, trendsetting library development. After quite a number of years with bewildered searching for some kind of meaning and purpose in contemporary life, the report motivates the public libraries to rise to the occasion with pro-active suggestions for a promising renaissance.

"It is no longer obvious what a public library is, what kind of offers it should provide and mediate, or what should legitimate it at all in relation to its surroundings. For the library it means that its role and tasks will at all times be up for discussion...". These are the words in the report's analysis section, which undoubtedly makes interesting

reading for the person who want to familiarize himself with important common social conditions that set the scene for library activities today.

Of the five overall recommendations in the report, the decidedly most spectacular one has to do with the development of 'Denmark's Digital Library'. When (not if) this recommendation becomes a reality, Danish public libraries will together take an epoch-making stride towards the exploitation of technology's potentials. In this field the Danish public libraries are totally in the lead.

Initially the aim is to develop a common net dissemination. Over the following years the offer will be extended via integration of digital media such as films, games, music, literature and digitised cultural heritage. The initiative is a crucial step into a digital library mindset. It is a great and courageous thought! It ought to be congratulated!

At the annual meeting of the Danish Library Association in 2010 the première was celebrated of a new children's library portal, www.pallesgavebod.dk. The portal has been developed by a large number of players on the Danish library stage. The result is an amazingly exciting and creative example of how by using the children's own favourite channels the public libraries can add real value to the complicated lives of modern children. The portal is also an example of what the libraries are really capable of when they succeed

in combining all good talents in order to find a common solution. The new children's library portal augurs well for the future adult version, which will become 'Denmark's Digital Library'.

With the exception of 'Denmark's Digital Library', the report's recommendations reflect Danish best-practice rather than next-practice. Under the headings 'Open libraries', 'Inspiration and learning', 'Partnerships' and 'Professional development' concrete examples are put forward – all of them excellent and useful initiatives to get to grips with, but even so I am left with a feeling of a little too much brain and too little heart.

Nor is this tendency a purely Danish issue. In Sweden the trend is cultivated as 'aspect policy'. In world-wide terms the public libraries must render themselves useful to the community by merging with municipal citizen service activities, organise homework help, promote reading and support learning. Running a library is a serious business, after all, but somehow something is lacking.

Over the past few years a normative keynote has found its way into the concept of both library and other cultural or even art-creating institutions. Art by itself is not quite *comme il faut*. There must be a purpose. Therefore, also the libraries are required to contribute to fulfilment of concrete, political goals. In the struggle against climate and lifestyle problems



“Why not leave it to the libraries themselves to define which universally human areas they want particularly to support and when?”

and to the advancement of Denmark’s position in the globalisation, by way of example.

Libraries have at all times aimed at goals that were useful to the community, but it is something new when the goals are linked directly to a practical-political agenda and at this level of detail. Why not leave it to the libraries themselves to define which universally human areas they want particularly to support and when? And why climate and lifestyle issues exactly rather than famine, human trafficking, not to mention world peace?

The report’s analysis section quotes a wise, Norwegian library researcher by the name of Ragnur Audunsson, when he talks about identifying one of the public library’s vital challenges as: “At

one and the same time to create a common understanding and cohesive force, and also promote and stimulate the diversity and the multi-cultural. At best, the library can be both an instrument for seeking that which we have in common and at the same time cherishing and mediating the diversity.”

As an active, practising library director I am very well aware that every-day-life is paved with prioritisations. What I miss in the report are weighty prioritisations that can promote, stimulate and mediate diversity and the multi-cultural. I also missed more profound reflections which would make us wiser as to why we uphold the inviolable integrity of the library, while at the same time taking on tasks which get dangerously close to exercising authority

and risk coming into conflict with the ideal of ‘the free space’. Once the innocence is shattered, the condition will remain irreparable.

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Planning for a forward-looking library system

In the Nordic countries during the last few years the public library system has received greater political attention than for some time. In Norway the report *Library Reform 2014*, published in 2006, was later followed by two Government Reports: *Report No.23 to the Storting: The Library - centre of knowledge, meeting place and cultural arena in the digital age* and *Report No.24 to the Storting: A National Strategy for the digital preservation and promotion of our cultural heritage*. Both were approved by the Norwegian Parliament in the spring of 2009. They deal with all libraries, both public and special, regarding them as one complete unit, and they also contain an archive/library/museum perspective.

These documents form the basis of national library policy until 2014 and represent the public library code of values attuned to the requirements of the modern age. They advocate an offensive library policy towards the development of new services, particularly in the digital area.

In *Report to the Storting No. 23* the central aim is to develop robust and flexible libraries which can offer improved services to all members of the public, not least by strengthening and developing the library as a public meeting place promoting culture and knowledge. The report emphasises the need for clearer aims and requirements, improved division of responsibility and a specific programme of initiatives to achieve the development necessary.

In Norway the responsibility for running public libraries lies with the municipalities. The Library Act, together with government strategies and initiatives, ensures on a national level that all municipalities have libraries offering

the designated minimum level of services, that a nationwide infrastructure exists for the public library system as a whole and that funds are set aside to stimulate the development of public and county libraries.

The main challenge for library development will lie in the transition from a traditional, collection-oriented library with its focus on internal systems to a library with a genuine focus on the user, a stronger library network and joint digital services.

The digital perspective

The digital perspective is prevalent and dominant at many levels. It affects all types of libraries and will be intrinsic to all future development of library services. *Report to the Storting No. 24*, which deals with the digitalisation of our cultural heritage, outlines an overall national strategy to preserve, make accessible and promote collections in the cultural sphere by the use of digital information and communication technology. The report praises the National Library of Norway's programme to make all published content, without exception, accessible in digital form. This undertaking is also viewed in relation to digital initiatives internationally. Many of the initiatives proposed in this government report are already about to become reality, as detailed in the article on digital preservation by Vigdis Moe Skarstein.

Literature and reading

Report to the Storting No 23 also examines the role of the public library as an arena for learning, reading and literacy. Emphasis is laid on the natural place of libraries as arenas for the dis-

semination of culture and literature within the municipalities. The current Library Act makes no mention of this as a function of libraries but the report foresees the introduction of revised legislation to emphasise this aspect of their role in society"

A national campaign to raise the standard of reading and literacy is heralded for the period 2010-2014 with public libraries playing a central role in the promotion of literature and improved reading skills. The ultimate aim is a comprehensive, nationwide reading policy to improve literacy throughout the country. This in its turn can help to strengthen democracy by giving the population greater possibilities to participate in community affairs and activities. Reading skills and digital competence are to be seen as closely connected. The campaign has already started this year, the main target group being adults who read very little.

Closer co-operation

In Norway there are many small libraries with limited resources and short opening hours. Both public and county libraries face particular challenges related to expectations of improved library services, while yet at the same time many public libraries struggle to maintain a sufficiently high level of professionalism and staff competence.

Many local authorities these days experience difficulty in appointing a qualified head librarian, while 244 out of 430 municipalities devote less than one man-labour year to running their libraries. This situation provides a poor basis for the development of modern library services, regardless of the abili-



PC-line at Drammen Library, Norway. Photo: Torbjørn Tandberg



Leikny Haga Indergaard

ties of any one librarian. The smaller municipalities have library users whose interests and needs for knowledge and culture are just as varied and just as great as among those living in larger communities. The challenge is to offer the public an equally satisfactory standard of service regardless of which library they may choose to use. Society has changed. New methods of communication, developments in the workplace and wider leisure activities all contribute to a situation where the conditions for a public library system to fulfil its tasks in the community have altered so radically that completely new solutions must be found, if the library is to play a strong and significant role in the knowledge society of the future. There is a need to foster greater expertise in a number of areas in the library sector, particularly in managerial skills and digital competence.

In the future these challenges will demand closer cooperation between libraries across municipal borders. The Government Report considers various means of developing a more flexible organisation of library services in order to offer users the benefits of a cohesive library sector. This vision, however, requires closer cooperation also between central government and county authorities. At government level steps have already been taken to ensure greater coordination of the tasks assigned to the National Library of Norway.

The model library

In the coming years all types of library will be obliged to steer a course in a landscape characterised by a strong element of traditional library services

combined with an increasing use of digital technology. In a mixed environment of this nature it will be important to encourage experimentation and new ways of creating good library services. The Government Report considers initiatives designed to strengthen local libraries as a place for new experiences, learning and the acquisition of knowledge. The starting point is that the public library to a much greater extent than today must assume a central role in the local culture. “In order to further develop the library as a community meeting place and to create an awareness in the public mind of the library as a functioning institution and a useful local partner, the Ministry of Culture will take the initiative of establishing a model libraries scheme.”

The aim of the model library project in the long term is to create “the new library”, the library of the future which will meet the public’s need to remain well-informed and knowledgeable in step with developments in society. The library of the future shall be a place to be, to learn and to act. In order to achieve a transition from the traditional library to “the new library”, a process must be initiated to change the structure and organisation of the library sector in a way which can be of benefit to the greater majority of libraries and their users. Model libraries will also help to influence the process and to encourage the structural effort necessary in the library sector to ensure a higher standard of library services for all. The model library project contains the possibility of finding different solutions for good, untraditional ways of running a library which are particularly suited to local, regional or national

needs. Development of the public library, both as a supplier of digital services and as a physical meeting place, will come to underline the need for municipalities to think more closely about cooperation and the sharing of premises for the activities they carry out across the whole cultural field.

Renewal

Change and fresh thinking are keywords for library development. Instead of continuing along the same path, using funds just to maintain the situation, it is vital that the model library project should provide the incentive for a genuine renewal of the library system.

A process of change can often be more significant than the result itself, since it can serve to create awareness and to encourage new ways of thinking during the actual planning and organising necessary to reach the intended goal. Not all libraries can become model libraries, but all those who work in the library sector will be able to learn something from the process involved and the improvement achieved. We trust that these two government reports dealing with libraries and digitalisation will entail the public library system taking an active role in the processes aimed at creating the library of the future.

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A national strategy for the digital preservation and dissemination of our cultural heritage

During the course of the last six months the National Library of Norway has signed agreements with three leading newspapers ensuring cooperation in the field of digitisation. These agreements contain three elements: constant delivery of material to the National Library's digital storehouse, collaboration on the digitisation of newspapers of historic importance and the right for the newspapers concerned to be made accessible in digital form throughout the library system. Several other newspapers are queuing up to sign similar agreements. The more we can make agreements of this kind, the easier it will be for libraries to offer digital search of newspaper articles as an alternative to microfilm and also to meet the growing interest for material dealing with local history. These are just a few examples of the ever-increasing range of digital library services.

The desire to achieve greater accessibility to digital material throughout the library system is part of Norwegian policy as laid down in the *Report No. 24 (2008-2009) to the Storting - National Strategy for Digital Preservation and Dissemination of Cultural Heritage*. The proposal, which was dealt with by the Norwegian Parliament in June 2009, assigns to the National Library of Norway major responsibility for digitisation within the library sector.

Bokhylla.no

Almost a year ago the National Library of Norway launched 'Bokhylla.no', an Internet web site which makes acces-

sible in full text digitised works from the 1690s, the 1790s, the 1890s and the 1990s. Some of the works from the 1890s and all of those from the 1990s are subject to copyright. This has been made possible by a unique agreement between the National Library and Kopinor, a body which represents 22 member organisations in the field of intellectual property. At the present time this service contains almost 30,000 books and before the end of the year we expect to have some 50,000 accessible. The National Library pays for the rights to make this service available to the public and its budget allotment for 2010 has been increased in order to maintain and develop this initiative.

From the end of May 2009 and up until 15th April this year 80%, i.e. 22,555 books, have been accessed on Bokhylla.no. This represents roughly one book page per second, day and night. We have 63,940 unique visitors (IP addresses) and in 2010 every visit has averaged 64.8 pages. This proves that books are read on the Internet, even though they cannot be downloaded. Books in NBdigital, the National Library's digital collection also containing titles now out of copyright, can, however, be downloaded and this is happening at an ever-increasing rate. So far we have registered 17,580 pdf downloads; 48 per day in 2009 and 75 per day in March this year. Figures such as these show an increasing demand for books in full text on the Internet.

Bokhylla.no is a 3-year project due for evaluation in 2011, but from what we can observe at present it is a success with regard to public demand and level of use.

A gratifying feature is that when in recent months we have provided links to library systems such as Alephi, Bibliofil and BIBSYS, there has been a noticeable increase in use. This clearly illustrates how Bokhylla.no and similar future services can play an important role in all libraries. This initiative is also a response to the expectations and the challenges raised by the authorities towards the public library system in general and the National Library in particular with regard to the realisation of national library policy by means of internal digitisation and the creation of digital services.

The Government Report also stipulates that the National Library should continue to seek agreement with publishing houses, newspapers, etc. on the storage of digital resources along the lines previously mentioned.

Absolute sector responsibility

The government's vision for ICT-policy in the cultural field is for as much material as possible in archives, libraries and museums to be made accessible to the greatest number of people by forward-looking use of ICT-technology.

A constant theme in the Government Report to Parliament is the need to concentrate efforts on those institu-



From the end of May 2009 and up until 15th April 2010 80%, i.e. 22,555 books, have been accessed on Bokylla. no. This represents roughly one book page per second, day and night



Vigdis Moe Skarstein

tions which already have a national responsibility and also possess the necessary competence and strategies for digital development. It points out that future initiatives will take as their starting-point the responsibility existing institutions already have to digitise, preserve and disseminate the material in their own collections. At the same time, however, there is a recognition that in certain areas there may be a need for collaboration and cooperation in order to achieve the desired outcome. In such cases the Ministry will appoint an advisory committee to study cross-sector strategies. The central message, however, is that strategies and professional priorities concerning digitisation should be worked out by the respective institutions involved and that steps must be taken to ensure greater digital development during the coming decade.

The operative responsibility for the work of digitisation is to be based on an absolute sector mandate. Given this perspective, it is natural for libraries in general and the National Library in particular to assume wider tasks. As a consequence of the decree that the National Library is to play the principal role in digitisation within the library sector, it also follows that in addition to the tasks relating to legal deposit the National Library also bears sole responsibility for national bibliographic standards, including standards for quality, format and identification of digital material, together with the task

of finding a digital solution for search facilities across all library sector boundaries.

Initiatives to improve accessibility

Equally important as the preservation and safety of digital material for future generations is the question of accessibility today. The Government Report claims that the Bokhylla project could serve as a model for similar licensing agreements in respect of copyright and other types of intellectual property. The Ministry will evaluate the possibility of some revision of licensing authority in order to open for wider use than is permitted by today's legislation. Work on national licences will proceed in cooperation with relevant organisations, such as universities, colleges of learning, the library sector, etc. As far as the National Library itself is concerned, this process will apply to its entire multimedia collection. A severe challenge in the future will lie in establishing agreements for the purchase of rights not only for printed material but also for music and film.

Initiatives for national search programmes

Emphasis will be laid on developing sector-specific search programmes and joint search facilities across institutional boundaries. Collection owners will have to ensure that the material in their possession can be accessed and indexed by standard search programmes. The National Library has been given the task of developing a joint search for all libraries. This is a huge

assignment which will take time to complete but we are already engaged in development work with the various companies which provide library systems. A further goal is to extend this development to the archive, library and museum sectors as a whole.

Cooperation and dialogue - conditional to success

In accordance with the intentions set out in the government report on digitisation, the National Library is concerned that the digital services we develop should prove to be of benefit to all libraries. The 'raw data' we store should provide a basis for the development of new and varied services in other libraries. The government has decided to transfer library responsibilities from the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority to the Norwegian National Library. The reason for this decision lies in the conviction that the library system is in need of a powerful national body if it is to carry out the policies outlined in the Government Report to Parliament on libraries and digitisation. The aim is to achieve a comprehensive library policy utilising to the full the new opportunities for development presented by digital technology. A change of this nature will make possible an even closer dialogue between the National Library and other libraries.

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Translated by Eric Deverill

Ministry of Education and Culture sets National Library policies

The aim of the Ministry of Education and Culture is to safeguard citizens' access to knowledge and culture in the entire country irrespective of where one lives. The Ministry specifies the direction and purpose of Finnish public libraries through library policies, strategies and library legislation. These set the foundation for decisions concerning the focus of the state funding to be granted. State programs define the general volition, which is reified by both regional and local municipal library and information strategies as well as by the Finnish Library Association and the Finnish Public Library Council. It is the goal of all of the abovementioned to safeguard equal opportunity to education. It is important to clear the path for the future of the library and to make it visible before someone else does.

How is policy manifested?

Clearing the path for the future of library services calls for the ability to see things as a whole, to focus on what is essential, as well as for knowledge of the history of the library field. The Ministry of Education and Culture as a place to work offers insight on upcoming national and international political plans, which are not yet public at the time the groundwork for strategies and legislation is being laid. Obtaining information concerning the alternatives to future prospects others have suggested is also easy. This provides an understanding of the direction in which society and communications technology is being developed. We can seize upon things we believe will work.

Persistence, quality and the right timing are the guidelines for the mea-

asures taken in the Ministry. Although governments and parliaments come and go, we have strived to ensure that policies consistently anticipate societal changes. We do not merely record the existing situation; rather we bravely look into the future. This is indeed possible by making the future of the libraries ourselves even if there is a risk that not all of the measures we take are the right ones.

Trust in one's own vision

When a writer has a strong vision of future changes and of residents' future needs of information, he or she must have the courage to act against that which is considered common belief if necessary. In past years the norms have once again been the object of repeal and specialised expertise downplayed. An amendment to the Library Decree in 2010 increased the qualifications required of library personnel and set a minimum number of personnel with a university education. The significance of core expertise in the library field was also emphasized.

Identifying the needs of non-patrons

The library experts involved in the ministry and state regional administration work outside the library in an environment where they learn to respond to the questions of non-patrons and to assess the status of library services from the perspective of the municipal residents and patrons. This is extremely important. Busy politicians, ministers and members of parliament do not have time to read or listen to long, drawn-out justifications; rather, they must be told about very complex issues as clearly and as concisely as possible.





Kirsti Kekki



Gaming, access to television, digital services in a social context. Entresse Library, Finland

There are non-patrons in authoritative positions in the government who do not have time to visit public libraries or who have not visited a library in a long time. Working with these people is the most productive as regards the development of services.

The understanding library personnel have concerning the needs of residents may not always be the same as that of the residents. This may be confusing to someone working in the library in a situation where, year after year, the library is seen as the municipal's most popular service and where the number of loans and visitors is still very high. In 2009, the number of loans was ca. 18.6/resident, visits 10.3/resident with nearly the same amount of online visits. Online visits are increasing at a rapid rate.

Timing

The ministry's political programs pertaining to library operations have been scheduled such that the central message in them coincides with each of the Finnish Government's new programs. The existing text in the current government's (2007-2011) program originated in the *Library development program 2006-2010*, which states that the role of the library as a local service and a multi-service system to promote learning, information management and culture among the citizens will be reinforced.

The text in the document of the previous government coincides with the *Library Strategy 2010* compiled by the Ministry of Education and Culture and it states that the availability of

diverse, high-quality information and library services will be safeguarded in the entire country utilizing the proposals in *Library Strategy 2010*. The basic library services will remain free of charge. Further, the government program for 1999-2003 stated that the public library is the foundation of national educational and cultural resources, which supports the educational aspirations of the entire population.

Trust and cooperation

In a small, sparsely populated country, it is important that those working in the library field possess similar objectives for developing services. In this way, decision-makers and politicians obtain a reliable understanding of the profession and the desire to promote the aspirations in the field. Contradictory messages from those working in the library field would quickly deflate decision-makers' interest. Functioning cooperation between the state, municipalities, library associations and library experts who organise training in the library field is essential for the production and distribution of quality services throughout the entire country.

National development has required that the people, working in the state regional administration and field-related ministry, possess university-level education, which enforces committed and persistent work. The way(s) in which the ministry and municipalities are able to turn their objectives into concrete measures and financial resources is crucial in an environment where the competition for appropriations is tough. There is an advantage in Finnish adance and implacability, although one may have to wait for results as many as 10-20 years.

What are the advantages of the ministry's nation-wide policies?

The purpose of legislation and pro-

grams is to provide library directors with tools and guidelines that they can utilize in their own realm of activity, e.g. when justifying the need for financial resources and staff to municipal decision-makers. Continuously briefing municipal and state decision-makers is increasingly important in a society experiencing hectic transition. National strategies provide support for libraries by offering various alternative concepts.

Library legislation and state financing safeguard the quality of library services and availability in situations of transition in society and in the accelerating pace of digital development. The Ministry of Education and Culture is preparing the state budget according to library policy. Those who are working in the state regional administration distribute part of the state's financing for development. In Finland, neither provincial libraries, central public libraries, nor the National Library of Finland have authority over an area's other libraries, and it is not possible for them to grant financing to the libraries.

How did the distribution and rooting of programs succeed?

How has it been possible to distribute the state's strategic policies in libraries? Municipalities are obligated to abide by enactments, but observing the political guidelines pertaining to libraries is voluntary. The answer is: all of this has been made possible by library staff that is not afraid of new things. Making strategies is not enough unless the municipalities and library directors commit themselves to them. The strategies would merely become forgotten publications. Professionals in the library field have always had the ability and courage to create the future. They have possessed a strong will to ensure citizens receive information and to manage that information, i.e. to ensure equal access to sources of information and culture.



A dynamic cooperation network, in which a writer has had the opportunity to mirror his or her thoughts, has been utilized in both preparing legislation and in writing programs.

The assessments concerning basic services made by library experts in the state regional administration have provided reliable, nation-wide information about the development of the library network, the staff's level of expertise, the initiation of digital services and library facilities. The experts also have a clear picture of the situation of provincial libraries and needs for development as well as the sufficiency of services in provincial libraries. Together with other actors and provincial libraries, they have distributed and rooted the programs initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture in even small municipalities, which are about 84 per cent of all 330 municipalities.

Consistency manifests creativity

The first library policies for 2001-2004

The aims of the *Library Act and Decree* (1998) were specified in more detail in the *Library policy 2001-2004*). It contained the local, regional and national duties of the library. Recommendations pertaining to quality were outlined and libraries were encouraged to engage in



Serving the 'customers' priority no. one
Entresse Library, Finland

regional cooperation beyond municipal borders. The recommendations for quality were eagerly observed even though they were not binding. The general principle concerning library services was also specified: the library will carry partial responsibility for citizens' information management by engineering quality in the information chain and persistence.

Since the 1990s, the Ministry of Education and Culture has supported regional cooperation, development projects for libraries and the production of content-related network services. In the past years, the Ministry has markedly increased the support of high-quality, centrally produced network services in the central library for public libraries and the National Library of Finland.

Continuation into 2010

The distribution of duties on the level of the municipality and the state was specified in the *Library Strategy 2010: Policy for access to knowledge and culture*. Municipalities are responsible for providing facilities, hiring qualified staff and obtaining up-to-date material and equipment. The state is to support municipalities by providing financing for running costs, construction, purchasing of bookmobiles and development projects. Emphasis was placed on the idea that library services should not

be considered as something belonging exclusively to the library; rather the information management of the learner and the electronic transactions of public administration should be developed as a mutual network service, not as separate, short-sighted projects.

Unfortunately the attempt to establish a so-called information society agreement that would extend beyond administrative borders was thwarted at the time. The issue was introduced once again in 2009 in the *Finnish Public Library Policy 2015*. It proposes that a basic information management agreement for citizens be drawn up. The goal is to agree on how to guarantee individuals basic educational rights to access information and culture as well as to obtain assistance in utilizing services in the future. The achievement of the goal calls for a definition of what is meant by the information management of citizens in a networked society and of what types of essential, electronic materials and services should be available to everyone free of charge.

Policy for rural libraries

The Library development program 2006-2010: *The library as a multi-service centre in rural and densely populated areas* program was purposely written before the structural changes in municipalities and services. The goal of this program was to define more clearly the role of the library in the future and its central purpose as part of a vibrant countryside. The program contained proposals for alternative concepts to local library and bookmobile services, for example. During the initial phase of the program the Ministry of Education and Culture distributed a questionnaire to all libraries, the purpose of which was to obtain information about the opinions and needs of rural libraries in relation to official provincial libraries and voluntary regional libraries.

What next?

According to the *Finnish Public Library Policy 2015: National strategic areas of focus*, written in 2009, expertise and quality will be the areas of focus in the upcoming years. The reality of how the increasing popularity of network services has placed libraries in a tight competition with other actors for the first time was brought forth in the program. They are even competing for people's time. According to the program, libraries are able to answer to this situation best by improving the core expertise in library work. Library Policy 2015 received much influence from those working in different types of libraries. The Ministry requested the opinions of approximately 30 people concerning what the library would be like in the year 2035. All of the respondents replied immediately. One seldom sees this type of reaction in other professions. The opinions of the chosen respondents were published and distributed to all libraries and partners.

To be able to succeed in the future, libraries must produce the type of added value that no one else is able to offer. Future success must be earned. The right of existence is visible when patrons use library services. These are the policies with which we will engage in the preparation of new library legislation together with new partner networks.

Kirsti Kekki
Counsellor for Cultural Affairs,
Ministry of Education and Culture
Compiler of library legislation and writer of library
policies and strategies

Photo: Jorma Waldén

Playing together SOU 2010:11

Regional cultural activities with government support

Library operations

There are around 1,300 public libraries in Sweden, of which 290 are central libraries and over 1,000 are branch libraries, and, every year, they clock up around seventy million visits and lend the same number of books or other media. The public libraries are administered by municipalities whose library services are complemented by county libraries, lending centres and legal deposit libraries. The county libraries are financed primarily by the county councils, who are responsible for them. On average, central government grants provide around a quarter of the necessary finance.

Central government grants to the county libraries originated with the 1930 Libraries Statute, which stipulated that a central library was to be established in every county. The Library Services Act (1996) states that every county should have a county library, while a stipulation of the 2005 Library Services Act stated that libraries and the public bodies responsible for them within the field of library services must cooperate and that municipalities and county councils must adopt library services plans.

In the autumn of 2009, the Ministry of Culture initiated a review of the Library Services Act and began to examine how the Act has operated in practice. In 2010, the government intends to present possible proposals arising from the current evaluation of this Act.

During the 1960s, three lending centres were established, and these are located in Malmö, Stockholm and Umeå, serving southern, central and northern Sweden, respectively. Their function is to supply media and source material

for articles to other libraries, arrange book loans and copies from libraries outside Sweden and provide help with subject and reference queries. They are financed entirely by central government grants that are regulated in the Ordinance on central government grants to public libraries (1996). The Swedish legal deposit library in Umeå is also financed exclusively by the central government, while the International Library in Stockholm is, in organisational terms, part of Stockholm City Library. Financed to 25% by a central government grant, it is open to the public but also functions as a lending centre, whose role is to complement needs for literature and documents in languages excluding Swedish as well as English, German, French, Danish, Norwegian and Sami.

Allocation of the appropriation

The Swedish Arts Council allocates central government support in the field of library services, while grants within the framework of the appropriation 3:1 *Grants for library operations* are regulated by two ordinances, one on central government grants to public libraries (1996) and the other on central government grants for regional cultural activities (1996).

The purpose of the central government grants to the county libraries is to provide every citizen with very good access to books and information, as the county libraries assist the public libraries through complementary media provision, advice, information, further training and special services. In 2010, this appropriation will be total 49.1 million Swedish crowns. According to the 2008 *Annual Report of the Swedish Arts Council*, 41.4 million Swedish crowns

in operational support will be allocated to twenty-three libraries, including funds for the lending centres and the legal deposit library. (...) In addition, a total of 5.4 million Swedish crowns in development grants will be allocated to fifteen of these libraries for their efforts to develop regional library operations, as well as an additional 0.9 million Swedish crowns to the public libraries for operational development. This appropriation is re-calculated annually with regard to price and wage levels.

A new model of cultural cooperation SOU 2010:11

Grants for library operations

Assessment: With effect from 2011, the National Library of Sweden should be given responsibility for deciding on the allocation of grants for library operations within the framework of the new appropriation *Grants for regional cultural activities*. Central government support for library operations is given to institutions that are the responsibility of a regional or local public body. (...) Central government support for the county libraries aims to allow them to provide support for the development and co-ordination of public library operations. In 2010, the total appropriation is 49.1 million Swedish crowns, of which around 14.9 million is allocated to lending centres and legal deposit libraries including the International Library. (...)

In *Time for culture*, the government has announced that the National Library should be given a special assignment that involves responsibility for a national overview and the promotion of cooperation and development of libra-



ry services, as well as for continuous monitoring of the work of the libraries in consultation with the county libraries. It is proposed that the responsibility for statistics relating to the public libraries be transferred from the Swedish Arts Council to the National Library of Sweden. On December 10, 2009, the latter body was mandated to draw up a plan as to how this assignment could be organised and implemented. This plan should, in addition, clarify the division of responsibilities between the National Library and the county libraries with regard to providing information and statistics in the area of library services. Furthermore, the National Library, together with the county libraries, should monitor the practical application of the Library Services Act (1996). This assignment also involves demonstrating, in consultation with the Swedish Arts Council, the organisation of continued central government support for library operations as well as the pre-requisites for clarifying the division of responsibilities between these two authorities. The National Library was to provide an account of its assignment no later than April 16, 2010.

The public libraries are the most heavily used cultural institutions in Sweden, and they provide important local venues for literature and reading as well as for local cultural activities in general and for disseminating public information to the citizens. With respect to operating grants for the county libraries, the committee of enquiry has considered allowing these funds to be distributed in accordance with the cooperative model that is being proposed, which thus means making them

available to the Swedish Arts Council for distribution to the county councils. However, it is judged to be highly advantageous if this new assignment for the National Library in the field of coordinating library services initially also includes distribution of central government funds for library operations. Those funds that are currently distributed to regional library operations should, in our assessment, be incorporated into the new appropriation *Grants for regional cultural activities* as a separate item and be put at the disposition of the National Library. The important role of the libraries in acting as a bridge between culture and a wider social perspective should be stimulated. The cooperation between archives, libraries and museums should receive continued stimulation through the joint efforts of the relevant national authorities, on the one hand, and the regional institutions, on the other. (...)

Grants for municipal purchases of literature for public and school libraries, support for measures to promote reading, and for literary events

Assessment: Grants for municipal purchases of literature for public and school libraries, support for literary events and for measures to promote reading, should in the interim continue to be distributed by the Swedish Arts Council, as is currently the case (...). A condition for these grants is that the municipality must maintain the level of its own media purchases from the previous year and also have adopted a plan to stimulate reading by children and young people as part of a concerted effort involving libraries, schools

and pre-schools. Support for measures to promote reading is governed by the Ordinance on central government grants for measures to promote reading (1998), wherein it is stated that these grants may be given to municipalities, pre-schools, schools, libraries, bookshops, non-profit making organisations and other associations operating in Sweden.

Grants for literary events are governed by the Ordinance on central government support for literature (1998). Both these ordinances will probably be rescinded during the spring of 2010 and be replaced by a new ordinance on support for literature and cultural publications.

Promoting reading is a priority area for the central government, and the 2010 letter of appropriation for the Swedish Arts Council states that at least thirteen million Swedish crowns will be spent on measures to promote reading. At present, six major projects to promote reading are in progress, involving a total of fifteen counties. Priority is given to projects organised on the basis of a broad, concerted effort. Several of these projects aim to develop this form of cooperation between public and pre-schools, schools, children's health clinics and the voluntary sector. Within the framework of the cooperation between the Swedish Arts Council and the county libraries, the county librarians adopted a number of joint development areas for concerted efforts to promote reading.

Editorial remark:
This extract is slightly foreshortened

Government draft bill 2009/10:3

Time for culture

Overall responsibility for government support and coordination of library services

Government assessment: The National Library of Sweden should be given a special assignment when it comes to assuming responsibility for a national overview, promoting collaboration and the development of library services, as well as continuously monitoring the work of the libraries in consultation with the county libraries. However, this assignment does not cover the research, university and college libraries. The government intends to give the National Library of Sweden the task of drawing up a plan for the practical implementation of this assignment.

Reasons for the government assessment

Libraries are a vital societal resource that possess a major development potential in tomorrow's society, as they strive to promote literacy, education, lifelong learning, culture, and the dissemination of information.

Sweden has highly developed library services in the form of public libraries, school libraries, county and regional libraries, and also university and college libraries, all of which are publicly financed but are the responsibility of different public bodies, at a national, municipal and municipal/county council level. In addition, there are corporate and private libraries. Their tasks and target groups often coincide but are also different. Different kinds of libraries, however,

are converging: for example, students are making increasing use of public libraries. In various localities, school libraries are being incorporated into municipal public libraries. In several counties or regions, efforts are in hand to view all libraries within a region as a common resource. Development efforts are being undertaken for various reasons, including bridging the divide between public and research libraries and transcending regional boundaries.

As pointed out by the committee of inquiry into cultural policy and the majority of consultation responses, what is needed is both a national overview and greater interaction between national, regional and municipal library services, two factors in line with the *Library Services Act* (1996), which states that libraries and the bodies responsible for public library services, should cooperate. With a view to improving the conditions for such wider collaboration, it is proposed that the National Library of Sweden, in addition to its present role as a research library, also be responsible for this national overview and promote collaboration and development within the library services sector that is administered by municipal or regional bodies.

The government intends to give the National Library of Sweden the task of drawing up a plan for the practical implementation of this assignment. Research and college libraries are thus not included in this new specific assignment. Together with the county libraries, the National Library of Sweden is

to monitor the practical implementation of the Library Services Act and also be responsible for the provision of relevant information and statistics in this field. The county libraries will be assigned a clearer role in monitoring developments within each region, thereby assisting and complementing the efforts undertaken by the National Library of Sweden with regard to these issues.

The National Library of Sweden is primarily a research library with overall responsibility for receiving, preserving, describing and making available the entirety of printed matter in Swedish as well as films, phonograms and videograms for research purposes. It also collects and makes available certain research works in foreign languages. Such duties will continue to be its primary mission, and its capacity to undertake its primary duties must not be restricted by its assignment to promote, coordinate and explore issues within a wider field of library services. The government also considers that it is necessary to ensure that its operations are given the special resources that this task requires.

The duty of the public libraries to promote reading through cultural activities and in a local context, where in many cases children and young people are the primary target group, differs considerably, however, from the role of the research libraries. In its role as coordinator, the National Library of Sweden should also focus its attention on



The National Library of Sweden. Photo: Ulf Lundin

differences between different kinds of libraries and it probably needs to widen its expertise with regard to the work of public and school libraries.

The government considers that the universities and colleges should have a far-reaching autonomy so that they can act independently and outside the control of other public bodies, while the pluralism of the research and college system is also to be maintained. Consequently, the government does not consider it justified to expand the role of the National Library of Sweden as regards the college and research libraries.

The National Library of Sweden

The primary mission of this institution is to receive, preserve and describe the entirety of printed matter in Swedish and also maintain a representative collection of research literature in foreign languages in the social sciences and the humanities. Its other responsibilities include LIBRIS, the national online catalogue, certain collaboration issues between research libraries and also coordination, development and certain studies in the field of library services. It is considered that there are excellent opportunities for further developments relating to licence procurement, joint cataloguing and similar functions. The National Library possesses great expertise and experience in promoting and coordinating digital cooperation and should therefore be assigned a clearer role on behalf of the entire sector. Developments in digital technology

also mean that access to digital literature is one issue that should be highlighted.

The Swedish Arts Council is currently responsible for national library statistics and this responsibility should be transferred to the National Library, which should also cooperate on this issue with the county libraries.

The county libraries

The County libraries deal with development and renewal of the libraries in the counties and their duties include supporting, coordinating, developing and supplementing municipal and municipal/regional libraries located there. Around 30% of the budget of the county libraries is financed by central government and the remaining 70% by the county councils.

In addition to the county libraries, there are lending centres and legal deposit libraries, which function as central interlibrary loan repositories. In Stockholm, the International Library also functions as a lending centre for all the libraries in Sweden. The county libraries are key actors in the national library services infrastructure, and the government holds that it ought to be possible to develop and clarify their role in certain matters, including the responsibility for coordination and quality enhancement of library services within each county or region. In this context, the cooperation between the National Library and the Library of Talking Books and Braille is vital.

The Swedish Library of Talking Books and Braille

This institution cooperates with other libraries so that those with some form of disability are able to have access to e.g. Talking Books and Braille books as well as e-texts. The committee of inquiry into cultural policy proposes, among other measures, that the Library of Talking Books and Braille should be charged with monitoring compliance with Section 8 of the Library Services Act with respect to that public and school libraries shall devote particular attention to certain designated groups, which would enhance the propensity of the Audio Books to collaborate with other public bodies. In this context, the government would like to stress that the collaboration between the National Library, and the Library of Talking Books and Braille, should be enhanced.

In order to further promote the access to and use of Braille among children, the government proposes in its 2010 draft budget that the appropriations for the Library of Talking Books and Braille should include funds transferred from expenditure area 9 Health care, medical care and social services.

The school libraries

According to the most recent school library statistics (*The Swedish Arts Council 2009:1*), nearly one fifth of the country's pupils have no access to a school library in any form. Eighty percent of schools use the public libraries for borrowing books, reading and factual information retrieval. The



Kungälv City Library in the cultural centre MIMERHUS, Sweden

... libraries and the bodies responsible for their operations within the sphere of public library services shall cooperate and ... municipalities and county councils shall adopt plans for their library operations ...

In previous draft budgets (e.g., prop 2008/09:1, expenditure area 17) the government announced that an evaluation of the Library Services Act would be undertaken during the life of the current Riksdag. This, however, would not involve any changes to the fundamental conditions for library operations. The objective is to strengthen the role of libraries and their future accessibility. This evaluation is closely linked to the issue of a national authority with responsibility for coordinating library services in their entirety. Consultation responses presented by, for example, the National Library of Sweden and the Swedish Library Association, stress the importance of continuous monitoring of the Act.

Library Services Act states that there shall be suitably distributed school libraries to stimulate the interest of the pupils in reading and literature and to satisfy their need for educational materials. School libraries and their operations are a municipal responsibility.

The draft *Education Act* presented by the Ministry of Education and Research (Ds 2009) contains a stipulation that all pupils shall have access to a school library.

Ultimate responsibility for pupils' having access to a school library rests with the schools and the municipalities. However, in the view of the government, suitable aspects of the responsibility for coordination that rests with the National Library of Sweden, for example, with regard to statistics, ought also to apply to school libraries.

Evaluation of the Library Services Act

The Library Services Act was introduced in 1997 and stipulates that every municipality shall offer its citizens access to public library operations. It also states that the public shall be able to borrow literature for a specific period free of charge. In 2004, the Riksdag made amendments to this Act to the effect that libraries and the bodies responsible for their operations within the sphere of public library services shall cooperate and that municipalities and county councils shall adopt plans for their library operations.

The Swedish Arts Council currently compiles statistics on municipal library operations, including such matters as which municipalities have library services plans, but the Arts Council has so far not evaluated the content of these plans in any detail, nor has it undertaken a more thorough evaluation of the Library Services Act.

The Ministry of Culture has started its review of the Library Services Act and its practical operation. This involves a summary analysis and survey of its application, with regard to such matters as cooperation and library services plans, as well as the effects of the Act on the development of library services. Other aspects include highlighting relevant external changes after the Act passed into law, assessing the need for a revised Act, putting forward proposals for possible amendments and considering ways of monitoring and supervising the Act. It is important that there is continuous monitoring of compliance with the Act at a national level, although there must be scope for local variations as to how library operations are structured and organised. In 2010, the government intends to present an account of possible proposals arising from the current evaluation of the Library Services Act.

Finnish Library Association:

The voice of the libraries



Sinikka Sipilä

The strategy drawn up for the Finnish Library Association in the first decade of the millennium has produced clear guidelines for the association's activities and has made it possible to re-assess measures based on the set objectives.

In its strategy, the Finnish Library Association has envisioned itself as a viable, prominent national and international trendsetter capable of reacting quickly to changes. The values of the association include equality, communication, democracy, publicity and openness. The association's mission is to develop the library field and to improve libraries' operational prerequisites. Furthermore, the association functions as the voice of libraries and library professionals in society; it works for the benefit of not only public libraries, but also for the professionals working in them.

Making the library association and the library profession visible

The strategic objectives of the activities of the Finnish Library Association are as follows:

- 1) To strengthen the voice of the library profession
- 2) To intensify the activities of the association's members
- 3) To increase the visibility and clout of the association
- 4) To improve the association's support and the significance of the library community locally.

The aim of the strategy is to improve the visibility of both the library profession and the Finnish Library Association and in this way influence the pro-

motion of the library ideology. This objective coincides with the regulations of the Finnish Library Association, which state that it is the association's duty to promote the development of the library institution, to make known the libraries' social and scientific duty and cultural significance, as well as to increase the professional expertise of those working in the library field.

Influencing through members

To guarantee the continuity of the Finnish Library Association, its members must be active, working to achieve the objectives written in the strategy on the provincial, national and international levels. With regard to the association's activities, connections to decision-makers on the national level play a central role, i.e. with the help of the decision-makers, the association is able to influence decision-making the best. Supporting the members and libraries is important on the municipal level as is stated in the strategy. In practice, this is evident in the contention and support given in local issues such as those pertaining to personnel and the downsizing of the library network.

Communication promotes cooperation within the library field

The Finnish Library Association has supplemented the general strategy with a communication strategy, which emphasizes the significance of establishing cooperation among the various actors in the library field. The purpose of the strategy is to help the association achieve its mission and the objectives written in the general strategy through communication. The title of the strategy illustrates its objectives: Toward

cooperation among libraries, within the library field and among those making decisions about libraries.

The aim of the Finnish Library Association is to accomplish cooperation around the libraries, which would support library activities, through its communication. The purpose of the association's communication is to assist professionals in the field, decision-makers who are responsible for the operational prerequisites of libraries, and patrons in feeling comfortable about using the library, as well as to bring everyone together for the good of the library.

The communication strategy especially emphasizes the significance of the Internet as part of the Finnish Library Association's communication. The aim is to create a vivid web site, which is easy to access and where users can find current affairs, blogs, animation and links to other web sites all in one place. The other strategic foundation of the association's communication is the Kirjastolehti magazine, which is being developed into a magazine specifically for library patrons. The magazine supports patronage, the field-related web site and the association's other communication.

Sinikka Sipilä
Secretary General
Finnish Library Association

The Nordic Library

Given my personal background with Swedish ‘father tongue’ and Danish mother tongue it may well be that my need for literature in Swedish is abnormally great. But if we are serious about the Nordic cooperation, then it also has to be a question of creating library solutions across the Nordic borders.

With the Danish bibliotek.dk (library.dk) solution I can straightaway have books from the library in Skagen delivered to my library in Copenhagen. But the catalogues do not cross borders, which means I cannot get books from neighbouring Malmö. Because the Nordic countries are not connected.

The question is whether the Nordic libraries are connected. Yes, I am sure Nordic library directors talk to each other and exchange experiences. But is it the same kind of library we have – or want to have?

When I visit libraries in other Nordic countries, they do look like each other: books, counters, computers, friendly and helpful members of staff. With a sensible id one is always allowed to borrow a bit from the local library flora. And always free of charge. Fantastic!

But what I am seeing, is in fact only the old, analogue library. So I made up my mind to read something about the library of the future and found a suitable selection of national descriptions

of existing library strategies. What strikes one first of all is that Sweden – which we in Denmark have always thought of as being centrally governed – has no national library strategy at all.

The Swedish cultural strategy, *Time for Culture*, deals with the need for an overall library policy and the need for better interaction between the national and the local libraries. But the national strategy does not address the question of which tasks the libraries should take on. Although I most certainly believe that library development must rest on a local foundation, I understand why the Swedish Library Association time and again has been calling for a national library policy.

Unlike Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway all have sound, comprehensive descriptions of library strategies.

Generally the three countries’ strategies emphasize two tracks: the digital and the community.

The library strategists do not only perceive the libraries as passive recipients of new digital possibilities, but see the libraries as entrepreneurs and *prompters* for creating new services and opportunities for the public by way of the digital possibilities. This is most clearly formulated in the Finnish strategy which in every context juxtaposes the analogue with the virtual library. This partly as opposed to the Danish strategy, which still emphasizes “the traditional core services”; the kind of material, physical or digital, continues to



play an important role in the Danish debate. With the proposal about Denmark’s Digital Library as a comprehensive, common library service, the Danish strategy seems to be a bit more action oriented.

At the same time as the libraries want to provide the public with more digital services that ultimately can be obtained from home, the three library strategies underline the importance of the physical library as “a place for meeting and arrangements ... with space and services for studies and work ... possibility for quietude and concentration ... prevent loneliness and encourage community” (Finland).

The Norwegian strategy extends the library concept to include “the social library”, where the social functions are emphasized, based on the wish for a public meeting place for everyone. And



Tom Ahlberg



... but I have still not been able to work out how to get books from Malmö to Copenhagen ...

the Danish strategy describes “the open library”, which has to do with providing better access, developing the library space as such and establishing more activities.

The Finnish and Nordic strategies are more distinctly activist in their stated objectives than the Danish one. The libraries must “guarantee the citizens equality in terms of knowledge” and contribute to “community, participation and cultural diversity” as well as “support the citizens’ cultural education, national identity, cultural diversity and internationalism” (Finland), “create understanding and respect for cultural diversity, whether this is due to ethnic, religious, social or geographical preconditions” and “the library’s social role is to be found at the point of intersection between cultural policy, educational policy and a policy for strengthening democracy (Norway).

The Norwegian and the Danish strategies stress “learning and personal development” as objectives for library activities. The Danish strategy in particular emphasizes learning and inspiration as vital development objectives, where the libraries’ experience from IT-introductions and integration initiatives can be carried on and developed significantly.

The Norwegian and the Danish strategies deal with the libraries’ interaction with other partners in local cultural life. In Norway: The municipalities should think in terms of combining activities and tasks within the whole cultural spectrum. In Denmark: The libraries should enter actively into partnerships, locally as well as internationally.

It is also rather striking that all three countries’ strategies to a great extent

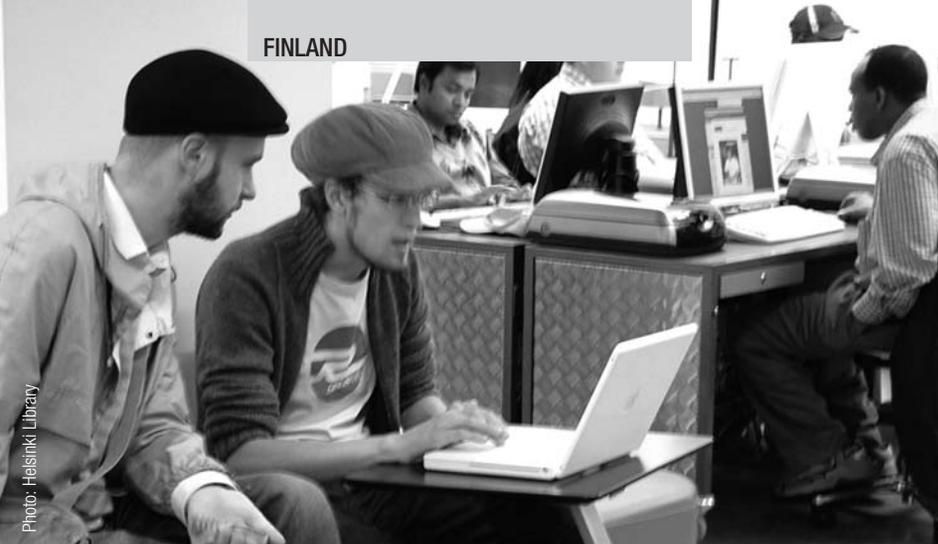
stress the necessity of having well-educated and competent library staff – and indicate possibilities for further educational initiatives.

I have many excellent reasons for looking forward to the Nordic libraries of the future. But I have still not been able to work out how to get books from Malmö to Copenhagen.

Tom Ahlberg

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Translated by Vibeke Cranfield



Tuula Haavisto

Libraries – where people and ideas meet

How can we encase library expertise when its constituents are ever-increasingly being transferred into electronic form? In a small language region such as Finland, this development has been slow; however, the pace is accelerating. A new reality in reading and in book production chain will meet libraries in upcoming years when a standard e-book device becomes established. The development of material for music has provided a sneak preview of what is to come. When observing the habits young people have in reading and acquiring information, one has to ask what do they need libraries for?

The Council for Public Libraries sought answers to significant challenges in the strategy-developing work. An array of measures was gathered under the title of the finished document, *Library 2015 – where people and ideas meet*, with which libraries planned to claim their fame in the future. The vision was elaborated with words such as ‘the library inspires’, ‘the library astonishes’, and ‘the library provides strength’. These words took flight immediately; they were the basis for the theme of the 2012 World Library and Information Congress, which is being organized by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), to take place in Helsinki.

A strategy was clearly needed. Today, effectiveness is demanded from services paid for with the taxpayers’ money. Those who have a clear understanding of their role in society now and in the future will come out on top. The Council for Public Libraries also wanted to form a shared future prospect of the field. For this reason, the compilation of the strategy was done collectively. The draft was revised many times in national and regional library meetings. A Wiki version was also made.

There was significant discussion about the public libraries’ values; the core values include reliability, equality, openness, freedom to obtain information, sense of community and open-mindedness. The meaning of these values was defined; for example, open-mindedness refers to the ability to embrace risks when testing new types of services and in internal operations, such as in observing other fields and learning from them.

Twelve crucial goals lie at the heart of the strategy:

- To develop activities together with patrons
- To ensure the opening hours suit patrons’ needs
- To change libraries into meeting places rather than keeping them as places for storing collections

- To enhance marketing expertise
- To network into new directions
- To engage in library projects with significance on the national level
- To support shared, interactive network services
- To automate routine activities
- To reinforce leadership and management
- To upgrade library work done on the net
- To teach other skills needed in an information society
- To engage in innovation and possess strong spirit.

These goals were broken down into sub-goals, which were addressed to both the Council for Public Libraries and public libraries in general.

The strategy was published as a stylish brochure geared toward decision-makers and as a longer version intended for libraries. Indeed, part of the strategy has already been implemented. In the upcoming years, the strategy will become the most significant precept for the activities in the Council for Public Libraries, and it will be closely followed in libraries as well.

Tuula Haavisto
Director of Libraries, City of Tampere
Chairperson for the Council for Public Libraries
in Finland

New Danish report - a useful catalyst for the municipalities



Jytte Bræmer

A sizable tome has landed on my table. An introduction to a new national strategy. *Public Libraries in the Knowledge Society*, has been a long time coming, and great things are expected from it – do I then feel that as a library director in a medium sized provincial municipality, I shall be able to gain anything useful from it?

After having read it, I have to admit: Yes, most definitely so. It is a good report. It is well-written – not least in the very pertinent and precise analysis of the society that the libraries are a part of, and the framework conditions according to which we have to run a library. It is basically familiar material, but it is refreshing to have it presented in a form that condenses the complex set of challenges so that it also addresses people other than the professionals.

The report offers some obvious traces. Traces associated with the local, physical library and the more classic library services. Traces that have to do with inspiration and learning, and not least traces that indicate a solution to the challenge no library can solve by itself. Namely the challenges in connection with the digital library. Denmark's Digital Library, as it has been christened already, is in itself a concept with many facets. It is about the development of infrastructure, common mediation, common entries, but it is not least about the greatest challenge of all: To organise and start negotiations about licenses, e-books and other digital products. There is no time to be lost if the libraries want to play any kind of role here and have digital goods on their

shelves. A central effort is required – everybody agrees on that – but the struggle about what the concept truly encompasses, and also who should be wearing the 'yellow jersey' started already before the ink in the report had dried. Not an easy task to centralise in a country, where the public libraries are owned and run by the municipalities.

One general initial criticism of the report has already been voiced: "Not visionary enough, only a description of status quo". My reaction is, however, that the level chosen for the paths forward is exactly what makes it workable in the municipalities. This is where the battle is going to be fought, and where the visions are to take flight, be implemented and turn into reality. If the content of the report is to make any headway out there in the municipalities, then the story about the modern library must be told to the local politicians.

The report covers a wide area, but one aspect that I miss in the report is some visions about the library in new constellations. Admittedly, there is a large section devoted to partnerships, but here they are imagined as partnerships built on the kind of organisation we know right now. In future I think we are going to see fundamentally different types of organisation, where the library is an integrated part. Already now we see intimations of it with integration of library and citizen service, library and cinema, library and swimming baths, library and tourist information, but from now on I believe we are going to see completely new civic

centres where the framework is quite different in relation to local requirements. A necessity and a possibility for positioning the library in the local knowledge-, cultural- and service picture.

How then can the report be actively applied in the municipalities? Is its destiny to be yet another volume in the collection in the library director's office? Hopefully not, because this is a fine opportunity to get the debate about the modern library placed on the local-political agenda. The present report makes me optimistic, and I believe that most library directors – tucking the report under their arms – will be able some time during the autumn to engage the politicians in a more long-term discussion about the direction in which the library ought to move.

Internally in the libraries the report can be used actively to mirror your own library in the 'beacons' described. To get all members of staff involved in the discussion about: How to prioritise differently? Have we got the necessary competences, where should we intensify our efforts and what should we stop doing?

So, as library director I welcome a report which no doubt will have an impact on the agenda over the next three years, and which I am convinced will accelerate central as well as local initiatives.

Jytte Bræmer
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Translated by Vibeke Cranfield

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