

Scandinavian Public Library Quarterly



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Theme: Structural changes in society

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Photos in this issue by Nils Lund Pedersen from 'Book a mobile library' in the municipality, Brønderslev – an example of a new library service in connection with the danish structural reform.

- This issue of SPLQ is the last one, where I have the pleasure of being legally responsible editor. The Danish Library Agency (we have just changed our English name from Danish National Library Authority, because we were often mistaken for The Royal Library) has hosted this pan-Scandinavian journal for five years. For the next five years our Finnish colleagues will be editors. It has been a pleasure to share knowledge about the latest steps in our public libraries with the readers, and I have had many kind responses for which I should like to take this opportunity of expressing my sincere thanks. We will still provide the journal with a co-editor, but look forward to working with a Finnish editor-in-chief.

Jens Thorhauge
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Jens Thorhauge

The hybrid dilemma

The future role and concept of the public library is still being debated. However, there seems to be a growing consensus on the hybrid library concept with its constantly improving access to web based services and digital content as well as on the physical place that changes according to new patterns of use – obviously with a stronger focus on the library as a spot for learning as one of the issues. This was at least a 'leitmotif' at the conference for national authorities on public libraries in Europe (NAPLE) held last October in Helsinki.

If I am right in this assumption yet more libraries are facing what I call 'the hybrid dilemma'. The dilemma is that on the one hand professional librarians realise the potential in an ongoing development of web based services – and subsequently changing the physical library space to cover what you do not get via the web. On the other hand when it comes to public library users (the situation is completely different in university- and academic libraries) they prefer – by numbers – the traditional services. The single most used service in Danish public libraries is still without any competition the loan of printed material. Even so the number of loans of this kind of material is decreasing. One of the reasons may be found in the hybrid dilemma: Libraries buy fewer books as they need more re-

sources to develop and offer new services. If those new services are not appreciated sufficiently by our users we have a problem, no matter how much we believe in a digital future for public libraries.

In Denmark we are facing the dilemma in a very direct way these days. As a consequence of a major reform of the administrative structure in Denmark the municipalities are merging and the number decreasing from 271 to 98 from January 2007. That means that a lot of public libraries are merging too, and nearly one hundred branches are closing down – and more may follow suit.

Now some of these branches are small with weak collections and access maybe once a week. Others may be full- and well-working libraries, but situated at a distance of 2-3 kilometres from the main library. The intention of the administrative reform is to give citizens better public service by improving the public institutions. We must hope that this will be the result of the process that we are now witnessing, but it has to be proved.

But the more the idea of maintaining a library in all major neighbourhoods becomes rather unrealistic, the more the professional responsibility to develop new services increases.

The web based services is one way to go, that is obvious. For years we have been exploring that way, and have had some good results and some less convincing ones. But there are also other paths to venture along in terms of personal service, which I believe we should recognise is still one of the most valuable assets of the public library.

The mantra is simply: Leave the library and offer your service where people actually are. We have a number of good models: the Kindergarten-library service, the class-room service at any level, service to the elderly in their homes, cooperation with clubs and places where people work. Most of these models have been used before and then forgotten, but they can be revitalised on a new basis. A good recent example that I discovered was an offer to 'book a book-mobile' for clubs and other groups with common interests. This appears to have been a huge success in an area where traditional use of the bookmobile was stagnating. There are many other roads to take – we should explore them all.

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One entry to Public Den

Structural reforms and new opportunities

Right now a major reform of the public sector is being carried out in Denmark. In the following I have asked the chairman of the Association of Library Directors, who represents the directors of the municipal libraries, to give us a general picture of how the process of change affects the libraries.

A number of municipalities have concurrently with or in connection with the structural reform initiated new partnerships. One example of such partnerships is cooperation between the municipality's libraries and municipal civic service. Aarhus municipality has i.a. chosen to integrate the two functions in one institution. The example is described in a short article.

In connection with the structural reform the Danish Library Agency has encouraged the municipalities to rethink their library services and has in fact provided financial means towards the fusion process in the municipalities. From the new municipality, Guldborgsund, we present an example of how such funding has encouraged innovative thinking with a profiling of the local libraries under the fairytale title of Snow White and the seven dwarfs.

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“An efficient public sector is essential if Denmark wants to remain one of the most affluent countries in the world, with a high level of service and an effective solution of the tasks”.

This is the overriding argument for carrying out a reform of the administrative system in Denmark. There is nothing new in that. More or less the same reasoning was put forward when the previous municipal reform hit the country in 1970. Then almost 1,400 municipalities and 25 counties were reduced to 278 municipalities and 14 counties respectively.

The merging in 1970 abolished the distinction between municipalities and rural districts, and this time the goal is once more to simplify public Denmark. The result will therefore be that the 14 counties with a broad range of i.a. monitoring tasks in relation to the municipalities are reduced to five regions, and that the number of municipalities will be reduced from 278 to 98. Many assignments are redistributed, and the intention is for the new regions only to be responsible for the hospital sector. The remaining county tasks are transferred to the municipalities and – to a lesser degree – to the state.

The motto for the reform as a whole has been “One entry to the public authorities”. This means that the citizens are to be placed at the centre, and that their problems should ideally be dealt with where they first come into contact with the public authorities. In the longer term it means the development of citizens' service in a broader sense, and not least the possibilities inherent in digital administration are supposed to secure the popularity of the reform with the ordinary man in the street.

But before this becomes a reality, the largest fusion in the history of Denmark will have to be accomplished, and this will bring considerable influence to bear on thousands of public employees having to move workplace, facing changes of assignments or – for many people – both.

The reform is to be carried out within the shortest possible period of time. In the summer of 2002 the discussion on structural reform starts in the media. In the following two years the government sets up a commission who analyse the problem and puts forward proposals. In 2004 the political negotiations ends in a final political agreement and in local and regional elections in November 2005. The reform comes into force on 1. January 2007.

Such extensive and swift changes are, of course, not carried out without some misgivings. Both employees and citizens have expressed concern that the future might bring about some deterioration, but it has been a great help that the reform is carried out during the most dramatic boom in recent times.

The municipal libraries have thus been rather busy over the past few years, but the libraries' long tradition of cooperation and networking has proved its exceptional value.

Like elsewhere in the municipal world the reform was viewed in public library circles with both expectation and apprehension.

For quite some time many libraries had found it hard to keep up with technological developments. As the professional reality facing staff becomes more and more complex, the need to join together in large professional units increases.

mark Libraries on an upward move



Jørgen Bartholdy

The Danish National Library Authority has therefore for several years been supporting cooperations between various municipal libraries within the framework of the ordinary development pools, but it is quite obvious that a reform which places the libraries in new, larger municipalities is going to offer a far better opportunity to build larger and more efficient professional networks.

So far so good – but there is also considerable fear that the municipalities in the new structure will create libraries with less well defined tasks and an impossible organisation. A lot of people feared that many municipalities would establish independently administered libraries on an equal footing, with a joint management at the top. This would mean that the tie between management and library professional development would be severed. A development that would hit a sector, which depends on close cooperation across sectoral and municipal borders, harder than others sectors, where the individual institutions live their own lives without being dependent on a larger community.

Most worries on that account seem, however, to have been confounded. This is due not least to the Danish National Library Authority and the National Association of Local Authorities having beforehand prepared a set of guidelines, which have on the whole been adhered to by all municipalities. By far the largest number of municipalities have already formed one joint library service with one library director placed in the library, and in most places the merging process is in full swing. It is a positive thing that there has often been keen competition in the

municipalities as to where the main library were to be situated. A library is a bonus for a town – that seems to be generally accepted.

Beforehand it was feared that the appointment of library directors would entail fight and bitterness between previously good colleagues, but mostly things have worked out quite calmly and to the satisfaction of the majority.

Of those tasks that have to be solved before 1. January 2007 it is relatively certain that all municipalities will have ensured their citizens equal conditions as regards library service. Harmonisation of fees, regulations and homepages will be in place in most libraries, but also joint computer systems look to be achieved in time, and generally one has to say that the reform has updated the public libraries technologically. Already before the reform comes into force, many members of staff are therefore experiencing improvements in their daily working conditions.

The reform work has been carried out in great harmony and this is due to the libraries' long tradition of cooperation, but has also been underpinned by the Danish National Library Authority which already at an early stage set aside means from the central development pool for projects that were to further the process within the libraries. Local publicity in connection with the many projects both outside and within the municipality has helped to put a positive focus on the libraries' handling of the reform.

There is still reason for some concern, though. Not least as regards the financial side of things. Parallel with the reform in the municipalities, another

reform is being carried out concerning a harmonisation system, which is to ensure a fair distribution of resources between the municipalities. As this is being done without the overall financial frame being extended, and as the reform demands a number of investments, the libraries have – with a few exceptions – seen their budgets reduced beyond what could be gained by future rationalisations. This has led to the closure of many libraries. And this time it is not only a question of old-fashioned and infrequently used branches. Large and well-functioning town libraries have succumbed, and even though in most cases it is due to a modernisation of the whole structure, it is a situation that has to be watched carefully.

The libraries, then, are well on their way to fulfilling the demands levelled at them within the time limit set, but it is also necessary to look ahead. With the reform's overall mantra about one entry to public Denmark, the libraries must continue to develop their competencies within civic service. In a few years when central administrative functions will again be gathered in one single place in the municipalities, decentralised places will become necessary where citizens can get help and guidance with any questions they might want to ask the public. With its long opening hours, mediation skills and IT competencies as well as a deep-rooted service tradition, the library will be the obvious place to encompass that service.

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Translated by Vibeke Cranfield

Civic service and libraries

A partnership with perspectives

At the turn of the century a new municipal structure was introduced in the municipality of Aarhus. One innovation is an administration for civic service and libraries. The department is responsible for creating one joint entry to the public sector by using as point of reference the many common core services that link the new concept 'civic service' with the well-established libraries.

Synergies, core services and individual characteristics

Looking at civic service and libraries individually, it is easy to find differences in the ways of perceiving both citizens and public administration. There are different types of assignments, and one can easily find unique core services which might defy – or at least complicate – joint ventures.

However, we have chosen another point of reference, namely to look at what the two have in common: Fig. 1.

When talking in terms of common core services, focus is thus on *mediation* of the public sector mainly through the possibilities offered by the Internet (digital self-service solutions, public homepages etc.).

It therefore very quickly became clear that a common future had to be built

on further exploration of the intersection of the figure. This also meant that from the start we were able to live with the realisation that there are many things – and even important things – *outside* the intersection.

Civic service as well as libraries must preserve and strengthen their respective identities and at the same time build a common identity within a number of interesting areas.

Civic service in libraries without civic service department

Apart from a number of culture-merging events, focus has been on establishing common initiatives directed at the citizens and based on common core services. In this connection we should mention the project 'BoB uden B' (civic service in libraries without civic service department).

Common and unik core services in Civic Service and Libraries

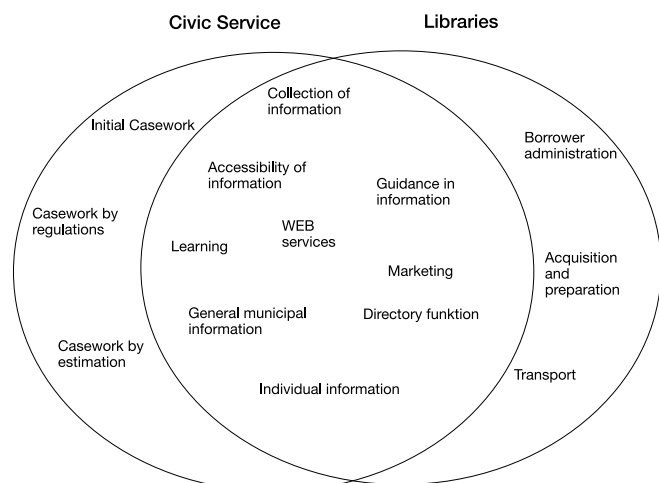


Fig. 1

This project is based on common denominators seen from another angle: the local. There are 14 medium-sized and small local libraries in Aarhus, and it was decided last May that a pilot project in two of these is to gather experiences by letting library staff manage civic service offers.

The staff of the two libraries, Lystrup and Harlev, is to attend a brief competence course, where they will be instructed in civic service-relevant Internet resources as well as being introduced to specific civic service problematics, for example differences in legislation and guidance, specific service situations etc.

The aim is for library staff to handle civic services and base them on those solutions that are already available to the citizens, e.g. the municipality's homepage or denmark.dk (soon citizen.dk). In fact library members of staff are to act like 'super citizens', i.e. citizens' super users in relation to public information and digital self-service. This is the way to encourage a strong, decentralized civic service, which – provided the project gets a positive evaluation – can be extended to all local libraries in the municipality of Aarhus.

And here we have arrived at the core of the matter and its main objective: the citizen. Seen from a citizen's perspective BoB's 'collective mass' can be condensed to *Common and unique core services in civic service and libraries* - From a civic perspective – Fig. 2

Common and unique core services in Civic Service and Libraries
- From a civic perspective

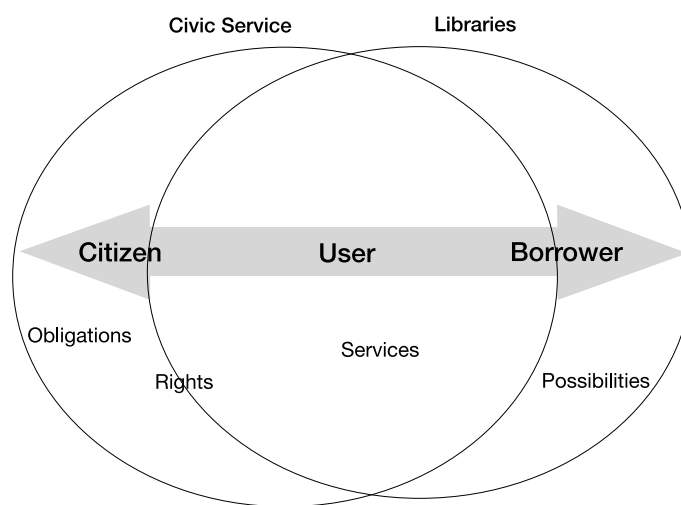


Fig. 2

By incorporating civic service the libraries become the framework for a number of offers and services which together give the citizen as a social individual the chance to have the broadest possible entry to offers from the public sector – *all in one place* – that is.

In this connection the local library is a relevant bid for a geographical anchorage to support the citizen in the exploitation of his possibilities in a network-based society. And as such local libraries (also) become 'social competence houses', a made-up expression, which is possibly a bit difficult to handle, but which on the other hand encompasses the entire philosophy behind BoB: To give the citizens the best possible conditions for participa-

ting and enjoying everything the public scene has to offer.

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Snow White and the seven dwarfs

The municipal merger on Falster and East Lolland creates a completely new library structure. Today Guldborgsund libraries consist of six quite similar local libraries, a mobile library and a considerably bigger main library that also acts as county library.

But the new municipal structure has provided the chance of starting a library development project in 2005-2006, where extrovert mediation and networking partnerships are the operative words. Each local library gets its own mediation profile and must be proactive in relation to users in a cooperation with external partners.

The dwarfs

With inspiration from the muses of Greek mythology, Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences and the local libraries' existing competences, a number of profiles have been worked out which each local library has to develop further. With seven service branches the number and the concept fit Grimm's fairytale *Snow White and the seven dwarfs* perfectly, but due to the politically decided future library structure, one of the branches will be replaced by a mobile library, so now there are only six dwarfs left. However, this does not change the basic idea of the project and the fact that the fairytale gives the project an easily recognisable and conspicuous image with which to market the profiles. Nykøbing Falster, the main library, is, of course Snow White – she, who has everything, masters everything and gets the prince and half the kingdom in the end.

The profiles

Each local library will continue to be a proper public library with all core services intact. The real mission of the profiles is in relation to communication/mediation to the outside world. With the profile as working title the libraries are given a tool to make their mark in the multitude of cultural offers and create an image in the local community. The profile can be of a physical, material kind and of an offensive/mediatory/out-of-house character. The latter providing the basis of cooperation across borderlines with other cultural educators. The seven dwarfs is a playful way of dividing our perception of the world, as it will hopefully become apparent from the overview:

Sakskøbing Library

Musical mediation

Activities: Concerts, loan of musical instruments, project 'buying and reviewing by the young', sound laboratory, street musicians, 'amateur musician dating'.

Partnerships: Music school, local bands, pupils' council, further education for the young etc.

Væggerløse Library

Song, play, drama and movement

Activities: Theatre, musical play school, gymnastic and karate displays, sports activities, pulsimeter, exercise bike, song evening

Partnerships: Local theatre, Music school, gymnastics and sports organisations, dancing schools, continuation schools.

Nørre Alslev Library

The narrative and the good story

Activities: Outreach story telling, touring cultural educator, reading circles, book talks in schools, radio reviews, newspaper column, Opening the book, courses in story telling

Partnerships: Amateur theatres, local cultural educators, institutions, schools, after school activities, recreation centres, local papers, regional radio

Nysted Library

Pictures, art and creativity

Activities: Library gallery, hobby exhibitions/workshops, painting workshops for children, lectures on art

Partnerships: The art society, galleries, local artists, art schools

Væggerløse Library

Natural science

Activities: Nature experiences, mathematics/physics activities, experimentarium, arranging trips, astronomic telescope, aquarium, healthy lifestyle, ecology, continuous/conventional energy, technology

Partnerships: Hunting and fishing shops, ornithological society, scouts/guides, chess club

Stubbekøbing Library

Roots, cultural heritage and history

Activities: Archive, local-historical exhibitions, historical events, history of the PC, loan of metal detectors

Partnerships: Agricultural organisations, local-historical societies, pensioners' associations, museum, schools

Mobile library

Mediation on wheels

Activities: Language and play, picture books, parent lectures on language stimulation, language camp for children, library club, writing competitions, film and theatre

Partnerships: The church, political parties' local departments, language consultant, institutions, schools, recreation clubs



Lone Garkier and Carsten Flink

The project has four objectives:

- To create a dynamic, communicative profile for the individual local library, thereby making a platform for the individual member of staff's further development of competencies and professionalism in relation to the mediation aspect.
- To create frames for a cooperation between the libraries, as the borderlines between the individual 'special' libraries are naturally fluid
- To create strongly mediating, unusual and different libraries for the users
- To open up the possibilities for locally anchored citizen's service and recreation administration.

At the moment there are plans for placing civic service shops in connection with two of the local libraries. On the other hand there will be no direct organisational coupling between libraries and an actual cultural/leisure administration, as the structure looks right now.

Form

For the purpose of developing each individual dwarf's profile, a reference group has been appointed consisting of competent members of staff from the entire library system. The task for the reference groups is to work out plans for networks in the cultural landscape around each individual profile in the entire municipality.

This way the interests and competencies of all members of staff will be exploited to the full, while simulta-

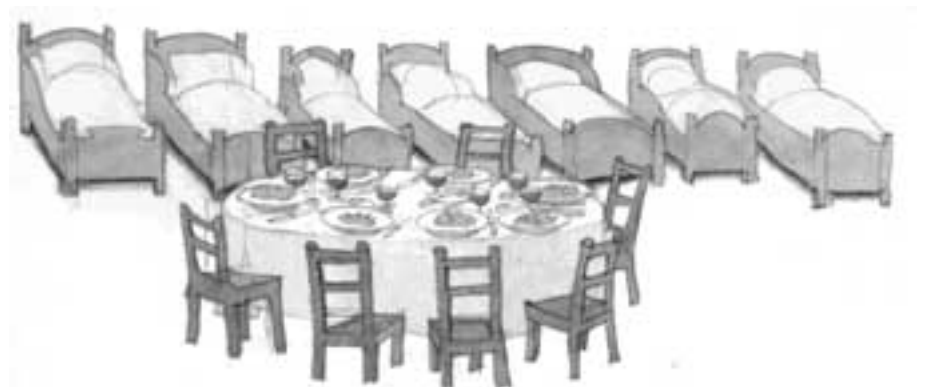
neously the libraries will be acting in an extrovert way.

The vision is to move from an almost exclusively passive mediation, where the libraries make things available, to an extrovert, active mediation, where the libraries as the municipality's largest cultural institution position themselves as a visible and vigorous centre of the local community.

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Quality and social value in the public libraries

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Niels Ole Pors is keenly aware of what is happening in the libraries and has over the years conducted several analyses of life “outside”. His list of publications is long and includes books and scholarly reports on choice of material, user surveys, organisation-theoretical subjects, students’ search patterns and management in libraries.

He also has many international contacts through participation in/running a great variety of library development projects and through international research collaboration.

The number of Danish municipalities will from 2007 be reduced from over 270 to about 100 as the result of a public structural reform. This reform of the public sector is going to be of great importance for the library landscape in Denmark. The fusions between a number of public libraries will bring influence to bear at all levels. There will be changes in management positions, different IT solutions will have to be coordinated, different service profiles to be adjusted and different organisation cultures will have to be integrated.

The structural reform takes place in a period of contract policy, where the government’s contract with the citizens is a tax freeze. For the municipalities this means that their economy is put under severe pressure because of the citizens’ heightened expectations in terms of service, increased expenses

due to demographic changes, and an harmonisation reform between the municipalities which redistributes incomes. Reports from the political system also point to the fact that the completion of the structural reform will be more expensive than expected.

The challenge for the libraries in this process is – apart from locally taking part in the process – also to position themselves in the educational and cultural landscape, i.a. with a view not in all cases to land on the lowest economical level of service – which might be a result of the municipal reform.

There is no doubt that the public libraries as a whole have substantial backing both in the population and in the political system. However, this has not prevented library debate this autumn tending to focus on quite substantial closures of library branches. And we are talking in terms of closure of quite major branches.

The situation for the libraries is complex. On the one hand there is considerable backing. On the other, the libraries have come under economic pressure. Like other institutions libraries have been subjected to demands of increasingly being able to document their efforts. This request is a result of both the municipal reform and government policy. The author of the present article believes that the demand for documentation will increase in the years to come. It will probably be more extensive than we have ever seen before and can hardly be fulfilled by simple gauging of financing, processes and the scale of services. The public libraries

will have to prepare themselves for being able to substantiate their influence, importance and effect in relation to a number of social values, and they will undoubtedly also have to be able to document that they have a favourable economical effect.

This poses the question how the public libraries will be able to demonstrate their social value. Certainly there can be no doubt that the majority of the population has great sympathy for the libraries and consider them a benefit. This positive attitude is part of the legitimacy that the libraries enjoy. Maintaining and strengthening of legitimacy probably presupposes that the public libraries perform tasks and deliver services that are appreciated, and that they do it a way that is economically responsible and cost effective, and – perhaps not least – in accordance with the targets set.

Over the past few years there have been a number of studies concerning the libraries’ economical importance in relation to society, and the majority of these studies indicate that the proceeds of the investment are positive. However, some of the methodical prerequisites in some of the purely economical studies could be questioned, and the question is, of course, also whether they provide the right answers to the wrong questions. On the other hand, there is hardly any doubt at all about the value that the population as a whole attributes to the public libraries. Most recently this has been demonstrated in Svanhild Aabø’s dissertation, which concerns the Norwegian population’s readiness to pay for their public



Niels Ole Pors

- The public libraries will have to substantiate their influence, importance and effect in relation to social values ... and to document that they have a favourable economical effect

library system. The results clearly indicated that the Norwegian population was in fact willing to pay more than they already did to maintain the library system. The study also proved that even citizens who did not use the public library were willing to pay in order for other people to be able to use it. Here we are talking about the so-called altruistic motive. In a way there is nothing very surprising in this, as we are all paying for welfare services that we do not actually use. The interesting point is, of course, how the willingness to pay is associated with a number of factors such as age, level of education, degree of urbanisation etc. Because this could provide a hint as to the legitimacy and its changes, if this type of study is conducted over time. This study becomes part of several major – particularly American and British – investigations into the question about the kind of value – also in economic terms – society gets from its investment in libraries. Methods that are not unlike the ones Svanhild Aabø applied in some of her studies that all show a positive socio-economic profit when investing in the libraries.

Library-professional literature also offers many studies that clearly indicate that the public libraries have a very positive effect – both economically and culturally – in the local communities which they service. Here we can speak in terms of effects at the individual level and effects in relation to local communities and trade and industry. The effects are often outlined in categories like:

- Increased quality of life and access to culture and art

- Equality and free access to information resources and contribution to coherence in the local community
- Improved personal development and recreational activities
- Less social isolation and a social space
- Education, public information and business information
- Commercial and economic effects, including a better educated work force, resulting in increased tax base, higher property prices etc.

These effects or influences on behalf of the public libraries are accentuated differently according to the public library's structure, objectives and prioritisations.

There is not doubt that the statistical data collected by the libraries are in themselves unsuitable for documenting the quality of the importance of the public libraries within the broader societal areas. It is not easy to conduct assessments and surveys to determine the societal value of a library's services. Statements from the population is one way of doing it, of course, but it is hardly sufficient, as these cannot provide answers to questions as to whether one might gain the same value more cheaply and possibly through other procedures or within a different framework. The problem can be illustrated by the difficulties involved in e.g. measuring the value of teaching information competency. Up till now it has to a large degree been sufficient to 'promote' it as a praiseworthy activity. It is quite another matter to demonstrate that it works and that it has positive effects.

Assessments of the public libraries are not made any easier by the fact that as institutions they are increasingly being dedifferentiated, i.e. that through their ever increasing integration into municipal educational and cultural life, the public libraries are given new assignments which many citizens do not immediately relate to library tasks. This creates problems in relation to analyses of value, as the picture becomes more complex. It may – but not necessarily – mean that the citizens' perception of the libraries changes. Analyses are also made more complicated because the public libraries will have to enter into more and larger digital networks and cooperative partnerships.

The secret is, of course, to establish sensible partnerships about analyses and instruments while at the same time not spending too many resources on it, but sufficient enough to enable the library at any time convincingly to prove both the value and the importance of the institution.

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Translated by Vibeke Cranfield

Municipal Restructuring Finnish Style

Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's government program of 2003 promised to ensure the accessibility and quality of basic municipal services in the entire country with a reasonable tax and fee burden. A prerequisite for this was a workable and vital municipal structure and the sustained financing of services.

Municipal and service restructuring has actively been in preparation for just over a year. Now, as the current government is in its final fiscal year, an understanding was reached in June, 2006, concerning the content of the skeleton law for restructuring.

Current situation

Municipalities are responsible for organizing basic services. Both the national government and municipalities are responsible for financing. Basic services include health care, social services, education and library services.

Finland's municipal structures are very heterogeneous. The most populated municipality has over 2,000 times more inhabitants than the least populated one. The municipality which is largest in area is over 2,500 times larger than the smallest. In 2006, there were 431 municipalities in total, sixteen of which are located in Åland's autonomous region.

Objectives of the restructuring

The purpose of municipal and service restructuring is to strengthen the municipal and service structure while at the same time respecting the municipal democracy. To obtain a strong struc-

tural and financial foundation for organizing and producing services and for developing municipalities, methods for producing and organizing services are being developed, funding systems are being restructured, and task distribution between the municipalities and the national government is being revised. When considering the implementation of the restructuring, we must take into account the accessibility and quality of services, the civil rights and equality of the residents, the facility of the autonomy of municipal residents and their possibilities to participate and express their opinions, and the linguistic rights of the Finnish-, Swedish- and Samí-speaking populations.

Municipal structure shall be reinforced by combining municipalities and by joining parts of municipalities with other municipalities. A municipality should be comprised of an employment district or other functioning district. Service structures shall be reinforced by gathering together services, which require a population base greater than that contained in a municipality and by increasing cooperation between municipalities. Consolidation funding shall be allotted to municipalities upon their merging. Joint projects between municipalities may also be funded. The provision of basic health care shall require a minimum population base of 20,000 persons and special health care will be centered in large municipal consolidations. The organization of professional basic training shall in the municipality or region of

cooperation shall require a population base of at least 50,000 inhabitants. During 2007, the municipalities must design a plan of implementation, which is in accordance with municipal and service restructuring, for the Council of State and the Ministry for Internal Affairs, and present it together with a report concerning the extensity of the service network and a plan for organizing activities among the muni-





Anneli Äyräs

icipalities. In 2009, the government will then evaluate the measures which have already been carried out and those which are being planned. The municipalities have already anticipated new legislation. Over ten consolidations consisting of two municipalities will take place in the beginning of 2007.

The status of the library

According to library legislation, it is the

duty of the municipality to provide library and information services, either independently or in partial or full cooperation with other municipalities. Libraries have been carrying out inter-municipal cooperation in many ways for decades. Municipalities share joint library buses, library directors and ADP library systems. Over 65 % of the municipalities belong to some joint regional library system.

Along with the municipal consolidations, a joint library institution is being established. Governmental library administration has directed municipal libraries into larger administrative units, including those libraries in municipalities remaining independent. Some municipalities have actually combined their library departments in recent years, despite the fact that the municipalities are still independent. Mikkeli City Library-Provincial Library already comprises library activities with three neighboring municipalities. There are three joint libraries in Finland, which are combined by two municipalities. A shared municipal library means that the number of service locations does not decrease in regionally large municipalities, although administratively the libraries operate as if they were one library. The library is therefore always a local service for its patrons.

Municipal and service restructuring is now in the hands of municipal decision-makers. The plans of implementation must also include the organization of library services. During the next couple of years, great changes are to be expected in the structure of library administration.

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Joensuu Regional library

The Joensuu region includes seven municipalities, which form a contiguous economic and employment region. The region's center is the town of Joensuu, which is surrounded by the municipalities of Kontiolahti, Liperi and Pyhäselkä, all with growing populations. Eno, Outokumpu and Polvijärvi are rural regions with declining populations. On the whole, however, the Joensuu region is an area gaining in net migration.

Regional cooperation in the Joensuu region is dynamic. Several regional projects have been launched and new ones are in the works, but no extensive cooperation has yet been successfully initiated in the economically significant regions. Projects involving cooperation are handled in permanent branch-specific service workgroups. The vision for cooperation is that the municipalities carry out open and confidential cooperation to strengthen the region's industry, economy, employment opportunities and services. The objective is to act together and develop the region into a uniform, competitive, strong and viable area with a good image.

Cooperation among the region's libraries already has a long history. Kiihtelysvaara, currently part of Joensuu, (consolidation of municipalities 1.1.2005), Kontiolahti, Outokumpu, Polvijärvi and Pyhäselkä established a joint library system in 1991 and formed the 'Jokunen' library group. Joensuu's city library and Liperi's municipal library joined the group in 2005. Currently, Eno's municipal library has a separate library system, which is being integrated with the others in connection with the formation of the regional library. Shared materials and patron databases will form the functional basis for the regional library. The libraries have already been working together to make the best possible deal in obtaining important acquisitions for over ten years.

They are used to planning and implementing projects and programs together.

The area of the regional library includes approximately 110,000 residents, just under half of which use the library yearly. The libraries' book loans totaled about 2.6 million in 2005, there were 1.43 library visits and almost as many visits to the web-pages (1.39 million). Total loans per resident in the region were 19.33 and the national average was 20.26 loans/resident. The area residents have grown accustomed to using libraries in other municipalities and due to this, there has been pressure on the libraries to jointly develop patron services. In the beginning of 2005, Joensuu's city library had approximately 11,000 patrons whose domicile was in another municipality in the region.

Upon the proposal of the work group for educational, recreational and cultural services, regional library reports were drawn up for the Joensuu region in 2003-2004. The reports were written up by Pyhäselkä's library director, Kaisu Kärnä. The regional administration addressed the regional library reports and the proposal by the educational, recreational and cultural services concerning the establishment of the regional library in its meeting on 22.3.2005. They decided to form a work group for preparing an agreement and making calculations for the establishment of the regional library 1.1.2007.

- The regional library agreement between the municipalities is built upon mutual trust and respect for the professional skills in the libraries



Rebekka Piilppula

The agreement proposal and calculations were completed in January, 2006. In spring of 2006, all seven municipalities made the favorable decision to begin a regional library.

Regional library operations will be arranged according to the so-called host municipality model. Joensuu will act as the host municipality. The current library employees of the other municipalities will be transferred as experienced employees into the service of the city of Joensuu. The regional library will thus have a staff of 91 persons. Immovable assets will remain in the possession of the municipalities and the regional library will not pay rent for the facilities to the municipalities. Movable assets, including library buses, will be transferred to the regional library without compensation.

Joensuu's city library will serve as the regional library's main library and the other former city and municipal libraries will, in short, be libraries (6 in all) for which the library director will be responsible. The libraries will have their own departments and local libraries as they now have. There are 11 local libraries all together. The library buses (4 in all) will comprise their own functional unit.

The municipalities' population base will be the basis of division of net costs for operating. The municipalities will

continue to receive their separate state subsidies – the change will not affect them in any way. The regional library's budget is approximately 4.2 million euros. In addition to this, expenditures for library operations include about 1.4 million euros in total for property costs and each municipality is independently responsible for its own property.

Financial obligations have also been set for the libraries' cooperation. The libraries committed to keeping costs at a minimum accruing a certain degree of savings. The calculated savings goal is 150,000 euro and savings from the municipalities combined share of payment is just under 70,000 euro.

The regional library agreement between the municipalities is built upon mutual trust and respect for the professional skills in the libraries. The levels of service in the library, such as the amount of hours the library is open per year and the number of man-years, are not binding in the conditions of the agreement in any way; the details of the arrangement of library operations are left up to the regional library authority. There is also a desire to ensure the continued professional development of the library and therefore the agreement stipulates that the library director must have training in municipal library and information services, which is in accordance with the library act, in the future as well.

During discussions about the regional library, many municipalities held constructive and far-reaching discussions about the future of library activities. It will be a big challenge to continue this discussion and to keep elected officials committed to library operations in the new situation.

The reason for establishing a regional library is to achieve functional advantages, partially by centralization and partially by distributing work. Human resources and financial administration will be concentrated in Joensuu as much as possible. Every director and cataloguer need not do everything – it is sufficient if one person does the job and distributes the results to the others. The regional library solution also brings reinforcement to professional development in today's drastically changing library world.

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Portrait by Ulla Pötsösen

Three-municipality library in the midst of South Savo

Joroinen, Juva and Rantasalmi are municipalities in South Savo, which approved a partnership agreement in summer 2006 to begin joint service production. The purpose of the partnership is to respond to the change in the service structure which is underway in the country and to preserve services in the municipal regions, as well as the independence of the municipalities. The area has c. 17,500 residents.

Service production is being organized according to the client-producer model, in which one municipality will manage agreed duties on behalf of the other municipalities of the agreement (a “host municipality model”). The clients are municipal governments and the producers are the joint committees of the host municipalities. In organizing the services, the goal is to obtain a decentralized, network-based operations model. According to the agreement, Joroinen will produce the library services.

Library cooperation at its best

When it comes to library operations, this region has a long-standing tradition of cooperation. Libraries have succeeded in carrying out joint projects, which could never have been carried out using the resources of a single municipal library. Such projects include two projects testing library bus Internet connections, two reading diplomas for school-aged children, in cooperation with schools, and an electronic data processing training project for personnel.

In the beginning of 2005, joint library bus operations began upon the initiative of library directors in the alliance municipalities. Previously, there were two library buses working in the area. The cooperation restricted the number of buses, but brought the residents of Juva's sparsely populated region into the library bus circle. The municipality of Rantasalmi, along with two library bus functionaries, is responsible for the operation of the library bus. The new, three-municipality library bus was ready and running in summer, 2006.

Library – alternative and necessity, JRR alliance municipalities' library strategy 2005-2015

Preparations for cooperation in library activities began as soon as May, 2004 upon the initiative of the library directors. The initiative stated the vision of regional library operations, strategic goals and a plan of action for reaching those goals. Work on the strategy was continued in 2005 with a joint seminar involving elected officials, administration officials for recreation, education and culture, and library staff. In accordance with the seminar initiative, director of library activities, Jaana Sopenen, was able to work full-time on a strategy for one month. The municipalities' committees of culture and education worked on the strategy in the autumn and it was finally approved in May, 2006.

The bases for the strategy are the guidelines of Finland's national library policy and the economic situation of

the municipalities. According to the regional library strategy, the libraries' duty is to produce cost-effective and equally accessible basic library services to the residents of the alliance municipalities.

The vision of the strategy is a hybrid library formed of the libraries in the region which would have joint, centralized services and automated routine work. The professional staff shall focus on first-rate patron services, such as information services, to support learning and provide guidance in civic skills for an information society. Three libraries shall serve the area and a library bus, which shall provide service in the tri-municipal area in two shifts. The service locations shall share a staff, library system, administration and acquisitions. The number of employees shall be close to the minimum goals set by the Ministry of Education. The level of service (quality and quantity) shall be determined annually in connection with the processing of the budget and, if necessary, productization of library services can be used as an aid. The objective is to produce cost-effective library services of consistent quality, which are at least on the level of that which is set forth in the finance law for education and cultural activities, for the residents of the alliance municipalities.

Implementation

The organization of joint library services is proceeding at a good pace. Plans are to choose a joint library



Library directors on a typical cooperative meeting!

Photo: Jaana Sopanen

system and take it into use, to outline a final library services agreement, to “test productize” the joint library services budget estimates, and to arrange a joint seminar for all library staffs.

Productization of library services has been seen as a problem in Finland and some library professionals think that failed productizations have already been carried out in our country. In these cases, a loan has been chosen as a library product and the library’s productized budget estimates were based on this loan. A loan has not been chosen as the product for the productized budget estimates of the JJR municipalities’ library operations, but the actual period of opening hours, for which quality content of the product can also be defined. There is no doubt

that productization will be a challenge for the alliance.

The many years of cooperation between the alliance municipalities’ library directors is based on teamwork and the use of areas of personal strengths and skills. The objective in the organization of personnel is to create a team organization and to delegate authority and responsibility. The personnel will be transferred to the services of the producer community beginning 1.1.2008.

Conclusion

There is a positive attitude towards the JJR cooperation in the regional libraries. The library directors have seen the change as an opportunity, not a threat. In a relatively short time, many reforms

have been made upon the library staff’s initiative. We are (justifiably) proud of these reforms. The importance of strategic planning is emphasized in cooperation – from the perspective of the future of the libraries, it pays to take action before action is taken upon you. We also try to follow the saying: if it’s not broken, don’t fix it!!



In Denmark the mobile library and swimming pool are also closely related - at least in Brønderslev ...

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The role of libraries in regional strongholds

How is the social welfare system to be maintained in the future? What is to be administered by the state, municipalities, county councils and regional public authorities – or for that matter, the citizen? These are crucial questions that are currently being dealt with by the Swedish Committee on Public Sector Responsibilities. The results, which will be presented next year, may well result in a shift of power from the state to that of regional public authorities. This may affect the casting of roles for among others the libraries and other culturally interested parties.

The assignment of the Swedish Committee on Public Sector Responsibilities

In February 2007 the Swedish Committee on Public Sector Responsibilities will present its final report and are expected to answer the above questions from a Swedish point of view. Its proposals will most likely pave the way toward major changes and have an effect on the public sector as a whole.

The reason behind the committee's assignment is the growing awareness that the Swedish social model is under fierce pressure. A state of disequilibrium has arisen between an increase in needs and accessible resources.

Globalization and information technology suggest new prerequisites with regard to working life, communication, economy and social structures. EU membership often implies the adaptation of Swedish legislation and its Europeanization, concurrently the mobility of the individual crossing borders has increased. There are more people

finding employment in the services sector and less in the industries. Demographically, Swedes are growing older; they travel more frequently and study for longer periods of time. Overall the health situation has improved, yet obesity is becoming an issue of concern and people suffering long-term illness are increasing. Class differences are once again on the rise and segregation has not decreased, on the contrary. As the numbers of elderly and those in need of health care rise, the number of able-bodied persons is falling behind. Yet, they say that tax levels have reached their limit. What is the outcome of all this to be?

Previous changes were achieved by merging municipalities

The Swedish social model has become a time honoured tradition. The Constitution states that all power emanates from the people. Democracy, universal suffrage and the political parties have all to a certain degree been influenced over time by the industrialized society. The past years have witnessed an intensifying of what is known as the civic point of view, and it is emphasized that all public services are to take place acknowledging the best interests of the citizenry. But if resources are lacking – are the citizens then expected to step in and perform the services that society has accustomed us to expect? Perhaps the question lacks merit, as this scenario has already become a reality. As a point in case members of families carry out a large amount of work within the elder care services.

One of the tangible problems, and also

one of the starting points for the Swedish Committee on Public Sector Responsibilities, is that Swedish municipalities are considered to small. The size of the population and tax potential is on the decrease. There are already discouraging tendencies informing us of the growing difficulty when recruiting for political assignments to some of the smaller municipalities.

Has the time come for yet another round of merging municipal authorities into larger units? Such mergers have previously occurred at regular intervals. In 1952 the number of municipalities was downsized from 2500 to just over 1000. Simultaneously, county councils evolved as an intermediary between the state and the local authorities. The main line of argument advocating these mergers was that local authorities needed to be of a minimum size to enable the managing of their commitments. With the upward growth rate of urbanization and the de-population of the countryside, the state imposed new tasks to the local authorities and there was yet another reform in 1974 which resulted in 277 municipalities. Ever since, development has gone in the opposite direction and 13 new municipalities have been created through division.

But even if smaller local authorities are increasing their numbers; it remains to be seen whether problems are solved through mergers. Two impoverished local authorities do not automatically make one prosperous local authority. To date, no one is certain what the final report from the Swedish Committee on



Jakob Harnesk

- Certain regions will feel left out and claim that their rightful place is with another region, i.e. a region whose growth potential shows more promise.

Public Sector Responsibilities will contain; yet the thought of a new municipal reform and further mergers seem to have been temporarily abandoned. Instead there appears to be different approaches encouraging voluntary acts of collaboration across municipal borders.

Focusing on the regions

It is more likely that a major reform lies in waiting for the county councils and the administrative districts. At present there are 21 administrative districts and several of them have a populace between 150,000 and 330,000. The three major districts (Stockholm, Västra Götaland and Skåne) each have between 1,2 and 1,9 million inhabitants. To each district there is a county administrative board and for every district, with the exception of Gotland, there is a county council.

The predominant area of responsibility of a county council is, in conjunction with the local authorities, the supplying of health and medical care for its inhabitants. Approximately 90 % of county council costs go toward administering health care services. Besides this they also administer public transportation, educational and cultural services, (e.g. county libraries) and developing industry and commerce. The regional issue has been a topic of interest since the early 1990's. Its evolution has been propelled by EU membership, the economic crisis of the early 1990's and the fact that two regions are permitted a trial period: Västra Götaland and Skåne. Moreover, there are, what is known as, regional

councils in nine counties, which function as a kind of municipal joint action groups.

The argument for creating regions is primarily due to the fact that health and medical care services require a minimum number of inhabitants to function in an efficient manner. Furthermore, the idea of regions is motivated by growth policies.

Several suggestions have been put forward to establish a limited number of regions, due in part to the need for municipalities with at least half a million inhabitants should be self-sufficient up to 99 % when it comes to health care services. But critics are quick to point out that the northern regions in particular would become disproportionately large and numerous ties between the affected counties would be lost.

The most likely proposal at present is to establish nine regions. A consequence of replacing county councils with regions is that elected officials will be gathered in regional parliaments and a transfer of a certain amount of political power, economic resources and authority from that of the state. In transferring authority to regions the problem of today's "drainpipe model" is avoided, in which an altogether fragmented sector approach will cause the various government authorities to lose their ability to gain a regional overview.

But rest assured that however the proposal turns out it will undoubtedly cause a major debate. Certain regions

will feel left out and claim that their rightful place is with another region, i.e. a region whose growth potential shows more promise.

There are also dividing lines between the political parties. The major political parties, the Social Democrats and the Moderates (formerly the Conservatives), remain for differing reasons sceptical, whilst the other parties are positive to the idea of regions. The opinions held on the issue by the political parties do not adhere to the usual grouping of rightists and leftists.

Does everything have to be streamlined, or are we heading towards a society where multiplicity is the order of the day? Symmetry and equality have always been the cornerstones of Swedish public administration. Social welfare should be of an equalizing nature, regardless of where one lives. But, autonomous local authorities and the increasing decentralization implies that decision-making is taking place farther away from the centre and closer to those who are affected by it.

What are the consequences for libraries?

What are the implications of all these ideas and thoughts on sweeping public reforms for libraries and cultural life in general? So far, no one knows. The work of the Swedish Committee on Public Sector Responsibilities is mainly driven by future demands on health care services. Topics, such as culture, education or libraries have been left off the agenda, or at best positioned somewhere in the periphery on the political map.

- Does everything have to be streamlined, or are we heading towards a society where multiplicity is the order of the day?



- It will be interesting to partake in the final proposition, says Niclas Lindberg, Secretary-General of the Swedish Library Association. - Perhaps the situation is such that certain municipalities are too small to handle a high-quality library service. Today there are any numbers of interesting collaborations between certain local authorities who share Chief Librarian, library tickets, computer systems etc.

- We wish to see a stronger national effort and are pursuing the issue of a coordinated Swedish library policy, continues Niclas Lindberg. The Government should either develop the Library Act further or draw up national goals for the library service. The main thing is not to give up on the ambition to offer all citizens' equal access to libraries and information. As it stands today, regional differences are too large.

The present *Swedish Library Act* has been criticised by librarians as spineless. Critics wish to develop the act from that of a so called skeleton law to a more detail regulated law as to content and scope. As for public libraries it is prescribed that each municipality should have a public library, yet nothing is mentioned about the number of library branches needed, opening hours or qualified staff. This is for each local authority to decide. The Act also stipulates that borrowing books should be free of charge.

The libraries most likely to be affected, at least on a short term basis, if ideas about large regions are realised, are the county libraries. The Association of Swedish County Librarians is following the work of the Swedish Committee on Public Sector Responsibilities with great interest:

- We have been involved on the issue of which kind of library services should be catered for on a national, regional and local level respectively, says Kerstin Olsson, County Librarian for Östergöt-

land and Chairperson of the Association of Swedish County Librarians. We want to approach this in a strategic manner and attempt to formulate a vision for the public libraries.

A shift from state to region will also give topicality to the issue of who is to decide upon future library policies. Should it be the Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs, the National Library, the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture – or should it be passed on to regional participants?

Current regional attempts

The shift of power from the state to the regions is exemplified with regards to culture by what is known as the cultural bag, which has been allotted Region Skåne. The state has given the region “a bag of money” containing all the collected state subsidies aimed at cultural services, yet with the bag are several conditions. The region feels that the cultural bag functions well, but wish they had a greater degree of freedom in distributing the funds according to their own priorities. At the Västra Götalandsregionen, a different model has been chosen whereby the state stipulates contractual obligations with the region. According to a survey by the Swedish Agency for Public Management, the contractual model appears to have proved the most successful.

Toward a cross-sectional approach

The Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs has recently undergone a reorganization, which has in part affected what was previously the department for literature and library to merge with the departments representing the other arts. This has given rise to some concern within the public library sector as it is feared that library issues will be the losers. But, the Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs emphasize that they want to conduct

themselves on a deeper level of dialogue with the county libraries, and in conjunction formulate what the strategic assignments and developmental areas are in relation to other regional tasks. Such new operational methods can be seen as a way to distance itself from the “drain-pipe model” and approach a more comprehensive view.

The need for an overall library authority conducting an active and library policy on a national level is occasionally expressed by representatives from the Swedish library sector. Perhaps this is a realistic prospect, or perhaps it is merely a naïve dream to avoid taking responsibility. One can also pose the question whether the eventual proposals from the Swedish Committee on Public Sector Responsibilities on the issue of a power shift from the state level to that of the regional, would entail the distancing of such a central administrative agency.

Are the libraries running at risk if these issues are located at a regional level?

- This might also open up for libraries to begin approaching new arenas, says Peter Alsbjör, County Librarian in Örebro. The county libraries need to respond to strategic municipal development needs. But, instead of applying ourselves in an instrumental or service minded fashion, we need to take a more knowledge-intensive approach, in order to supply a basis for municipal authorities and regions to arrive at dependable and well substantiated decisions.

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A Library Revolution

The proposed changes in library legislation send a clear message to these bodies

The strategic plan entitled *Library Reform 2014* recommends extra government funding of the Norwegian library sector amounting to about NOK 350 million per annum during the period 2008-2014. This should be measured against today's operating budget of NOK 2.2 billion per annum for the sector as a whole. "Such a bold and comprehensive proposal is nothing less than revolutionary, embracing as it does both public and special libraries", says Leikny Haga Indergaard, head of department at the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority. "Entitling the plan a library reform accurately reflects the strength and scope of the initiative."

In collaboration with Grete Bergh, senior adviser and leader of the project, Indergaard presented in September the report sub-titled *The Norwegian Nationwide Library – a network for knowledge and culture* as the result of an assignment given to the Authority by the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs and the then Ministry of Education and Research on 16th June 2004.

The argument for increased library sector funding is based on three main strategic initiatives: joint digital services, organisational reform and greater emphasis on expertise and research.

Consolidation

For those working in a library environment the most controversial proposal

has doubtless been that concerning organisational reform. In Norway there are many small libraries with limited resources and restricted opening hours. 244 municipalities have less than one professionally-qualified librarian working full-time and only 67 have a public library working more than five man-years. The proposal is for libraries to combine across municipal borders in order to form larger units offering the public better services and access to greater expertise.

As Indergaard points out, the library sector cannot influence municipal structure throughout Norway. "The law stipulates that each and every municipality should have its own public library but pays no heed to available resources. As a result we have many tiny libraries with limited opening hours and more than half of them with no professionally-qualified staff. This is hardly a satisfactory situation for the future".

The small libraries function well enough with regard to the lending of books but other services are marginal. As Indergaard explains, it is simply not possible for one lone librarian in a one-man library to fill all the roles demanded by today's modern society. There are children's hours, a web-site to be edited, accounts to be kept, students seeking information, digital services, literature and other media to be made available, resources required

for planning and development, various arrangements to be organised, etc. etc. Many of the smaller libraries are very good in traditional areas of library services and get the most out of the funds available. When, however, it comes to digital services, the requirements of the younger generation and participation in the Internet/SMS service "Ask the Library", small libraries have problems. At the other end of the scale, as Grete Bergh points out, the five largest municipalities, each with over 100,000 inhabitants, have at their disposal 22% of total library competence in the public library sector alone. "This overwhelming concentration of expertise stands in contrast to the extremely limited resources elsewhere in the country", she says. Nevertheless, although Norway is sparsely populated, 93% of the population live in municipalities with at least one professionally-qualified librarian. One person is, however, far from enough and that is the thinking behind the plans for consolidation.

The report shows that a minimum of 6-8 man-years per unit is required in order to offer the services expected from the library of the future. This means that libraries with fewer than five man-years will have to be consolidated with libraries in other municipalities. There is, however, no intention of closing libraries down.

"The aim is not for fewer but for larger libraries. Smaller libraries will not be



Signy Irene Karlsen

that libraries are a public resource, part of a nationwide network and a communal store of knowledge

closed down but will become part of a larger unit. This will lead to a broader professional environment, which in its turn will attract competent staff”, says Indergaard. “Newly-qualified librarians are not going to head off into the provinces in order to sit alone in a one-man library”,

The proposal is not that branch libraries should be shut down, but that they should come together in larger organisational units in order to ensure wider expertise and the ability to conduct development work in addition to offering services to the public. Bergh points out, however, that it is up to the municipalities themselves to decide upon how many library units there should be and how best to organise consolidation.

“This reform could also include the joining together of different types of libraries, such as can already be seen in the town of Drammen, where the Buskerud County Library, the Drammen Public Library and the special library at the local College of Higher Education have pooled their resources”, remarks Indergaard.

The requirement with regard to professional competence in public libraries today is linked to Paragraph 5 in the Library Act, which stipulates that the chief librarian should be professionally qualified but makes no reference to the rest of the library staff. “The report

describes the overall expertise a library should possess, the appointment of staff being regulated by individual requirements. Better services should result from the fact that in a larger system many tasks will need to be carried out only once”, says Bergh. “With regard to an improvement in overall library competence, the proposal is for a concrete development programme to be carried out as part of actual work situations”.

The Norwegian Nationwide Library

A central concept presented immediately in the report’s sub-title is that of the Norwegian Nationwide Library. This stands for a network of libraries throughout the country based on shared values, understanding, rules and agreements. Public, special and school libraries are all elements in this network. The aim is to create an infrastructure capable of ensuring that the advantages of library cooperation can be exploited to the full and for the benefit of the community. The features proposed include a national book transport system to be combined with the present and future regional arrangements, a Norwegian digital library and legal recognition of the library network. The latter, however, does not foresee joint legislation for special libraries and public libraries, only for those elements which involve areas of cooperation, such as distance-lending. Grete Bergh reveals that in Denmark this type of legislation already exists,

emphasising that library contents are a public resource. “In Norway the question has been mentioned so often in official reports that it should no longer be a source of controversy”, she says. “That libraries should wish to collaborate in this manner is, however, only one aspect of the situation. Library policy is also a matter for the relevant institutions and local authorities. The proposed changes in library legislation send a clear message to these bodies that libraries are a public resource, part of a nationwide network and a communal store of knowledge.”

A reform based on consolidation will result in larger units and consequently greater room for improvements in expertise and services. Already today the largest libraries serve as central motivators for the whole library sector, providing encouragement for the introduction of new services. The larger units envisaged in the reform proposal will provide a basis for more efficient working methods, thus making more time available for longer opening hours and a general improvement in services.

“In many ways this will be a form of cooperation but with each participating body paying its own share”, says Bergh. She explains that it will be up to the libraries themselves to improve their services locally, while the Archive, Library and Museum Authority, with the help of government funding, will be able to initiate measures and pro-

● “The core of the reform is not merely to ensure a better, user-friendly library but also to create a new concept of what a library should be

mote joint, nationwide services. There is, however, a good possibility that the Authority will be able to provide financial support for services such as “Ask the Library” and “Whichbook” above and beyond the initial development phase.

“Financial support for projects will be made available and those that prove their worth will receive further funds to cover the cost of operation”, says Indergaard. She emphasises that the Archive, Library and Museum Authority will act as coordinator but will not engage in running any of these services. “These are areas of initiative which should all move in the same direction. Instead of supporting random projects, there will be an overall strategy and a plan for management and further development”.

The increase in project funds anticipated in an earlier report on archives, libraries and museums and also in the government’s “Cultural Policy in the period up to 2014” has so far not materialised. The present report “The Norwegian Nationwide Library” makes it quite clear that the success of any library reform is totally dependent on the provision of public funds towards three main areas: an increase in project funding, financial support to encourage implementation of the organisational reform and the financing of a variety of joint services in the digital field.

With regard to the presentation of these services to the public, Indergaard gives priority to an archive, library and museum portal (ALM-portal), although one would not be restricted to this portal in order to access, for example, “Whichbook”. “Each and every library can present its services in the way it prefers on its own home pages. Although the ALM-portal will offer nationwide presentation of digital

services in Norway, it should also at the same time be possible to access at a local level”, she explains.

The report also recommends the national licensing of digital library content. “This is intended to be a two-part service, where certain contents, such as dictionaries and encyclopaedias, can be purchased for use by the general public, while other more professional services can be restricted to specialists”, explains Indergaard.

A further recommendation also covers the digitisation of material in archives, libraries and museums, together with a specific programme for the dissemination of literature.

“A major concern is naturally to increase the spread of literature. This presupposes greater efficiency in presenting library contents, particularly where children and young people are concerned, but also with regard to the general population. According to a survey carried out by Statistics Norway, there are large numbers of people who have no knowledge whatsoever of the services available to them at their local library”, says Bergh.

Other initiatives proposed in the strategic plan include a strengthening of library purchasing arrangements, a programme for library construction, an improvement of library facilities in prisons and a high-speed wireless local area network in all libraries.

Indergaard emphasises that the initiatives proposed are those chosen as most likely to help the government and the Minister of Culture fulfil the promises made in the so-called Soria Moria declaration with regard to the future of the library sector.

“Since public libraries are first and foremost a municipal responsibility, the report concentrates on those areas

best suited to a national programme aimed at strengthening libraries throughout the country, especially those with limited resources”, she says. Such initiatives will also be of benefit to special libraries and research libraries, particularly where digital services are concerned.

“The core of the reform is not merely to ensure a better, user-friendly library but also to create a new concept of what a library should be”, stresses Indergaard. “Libraries must heighten their presence on the Internet, in research, in education and in the local community. This applies not only to public libraries but to the sector as a whole. The key to success lies in larger, stronger units and by 2014 the library landscape will be completely different from today.” Leikny Haga Indergaard is convinced that if the initiatives outlined in the report are not carried out, the whole sector will stagnate.

The Norwegian version of the report is available at www.abm-utvikling.no/publisert/ABM-skrift/index.html. For your information part 1 of the report – strategies and measures - will be translated into English and published on the web. Since the issues in “Library Reform 2014” are of crucial interest for many institutions and organisations the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs will coordinate a consultation. The recipients will be local authorities responsible for the public libraries and other stakeholders.

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Translated by Eric Deverill
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HUMSAM-library, Oslo University
Photo: ABM-utvikling/Bjørn Djupvik

Nordbok for the last time

Nordbok's final meeting on the 10th November will mark the end of an initiative that has played a central role in Nordic cultural cooperation for more than three decades. Financial support towards translation work, one of Nordbok's basic functions, was established as early as 1975 and the first Nordic public library committee began its work in 1982.

During these years the support provided by Nordbok has been instrumental in the translation of more than 4000 Nordic books into other Nordic languages. Together with the Nordic Council's Prize for Literature this activity has contributed to a greater awareness of the literature of our Nordic neighbours throughout all the Nordic language communities. Although in many spheres the Nordic countries represent a relatively homogenous region, this is by no means true where language is concerned. Apart from the three Scandinavian languages, which are close to each other, the distance between the Nordic languages is in some cases considerable. Finnish, Sami and Greenlandic do not belong to the Indo-European family of languages, nor are Icelandic and Faroese understood by their Nordic neighbours. A mutual exchange of literature between the Nordic countries contributes to a greater understanding of each other's culture and society.

The very basis of the Nordic community lies in the contact between the people who live there. From the earliest school age it is normal for children to meet children from their Nordic neigh-

bours. As adults these contacts are further developed at many levels by means of associations, sport, daily work and politics. Official collaboration under the auspices of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers represents only a small part of overall Nordic cooperation, although their work does provide a basic framework for much of the informal and voluntary cooperation that takes place. Also at this level Nordbok has made a significant contribution.

By supporting courses, seminars and conferences Nordbok has helped authors, translators, librarians and others working in the cultural field to develop a Nordic network, broadening their knowledge and finding inspiration. Initiatives such as the Nordic Library Week and arranging for writers to visit libraries in other Nordic countries have also in their way served to strengthen the Nordic community.

Nordic literary and library cooperation will not come to an end when Nordbok no longer exists. New programmes of mutual benefit will be developed and fresh funding will replace the old. Society undergoes continual change and the measures we take to support our priorities and further our aims also need to be adjusted from time to time. On this occasion the Nordic ministries of culture have chosen to change both the structure of the area of initiative and the nature of the body set in place in order to administer the means available and to carry out agreed poli-

cies. I hope that the programmes designed to take over from Nordbok and the other similar Nordic committees will provide inspiration for new-thinking and creativity in Nordic cultural cooperation. I trust that the new programmes will be well received and that those set to carry them out will be most successful in their work.

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Recent library developments

bibliotek.dk in Google

At the beginning of 2006 Google Scholar was enhanced with a number of references to Danish libraries. On the basis of a copy of bibliotek.dk, registrations in Google Scholar are now carrying a reference to bibliotek.dk, if a book or an article is also available there.

Another special service is Google Book Search. Apart from the digitisation of books this service has since August been offering the chance of also searching in the libraries' collections. So far Google Book Search gives access to fifteen union catalogues from USA, China, Australia, Israel as well as Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and six other European countries. Google has used the data already employed for creating links in Google Scholar to bibliotek.dk, and thus there is also access to Danish libraries via Google Book Search.

Leif Andresen

Homework in libraries - a support scheme

Libraries can play an essential role in terms of creating a civic community spirit that cuts across diversities, and where ethnic minorities take an active part on a par with other citizens. The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Refugees, Immigration and Integration Affairs are therefore entering into

an agreement on strengthening the libraries' work for integration.

The initial result of this agreement is a new support scheme, where the libraries can apply for funding to establish and run homework cafés for bilingual children and other children who might be interested. Homework support schemes are designed to help developing the Danish language of bilingual children and to make sure that more young ethnics obtain satisfactory schooling and complete an education. It is possible to apply for an extension of the homework activities with informal learning activities.

The goal is that within a few years there will be 100 homework cafés in Danish public libraries. LibraryCentre for Integration and the Integration Ministry's campaign All young people are needed help with advice and guidance on how to set up the cafés.

Read more about this at
www.bs.dk/lektiephjaelp or
www.statsbiblioteket.dk/sbci

Ann Poulsen

Committee to help revitalise children's libraries

80% of all Danish children use the public library, but the most frequent users have halved their number of visits within the last seven-eight years.

Minister for Culture, Brian Mikkelsen, has therefore appointed a new committee of professionals and experts to look into how best to turn around this particular development. Children's culture has become a media culture, and children's media habits and cultural behaviour make new demands and pose new challenges to library service. Among the challenges are for example to encourage the connection between the physical and the virtual library and to turn the library into a place for experiences based on interactivity and participation. The library then becomes a place not only for cultural education, but where children are also included in various ways of creating culture, like for example in attending writing or multimedia workshops. The present library offer is clearly losing ground in relation to its target group and innovation is a must; this includes revitalising the librarian's role so that the library also in future will be able to attract the media-conscious and purposeful young patrons. The committee is composed of persons from the library-, media- and cultural area. In the course of 2007 it is to prepare a report with recommendations for concrete actions and suggestions as to how the children's libraries and their services can be made more attractive to children.

Anna Enemark

Keep up with developments in the Nordic public libraries in Scandinavian Public Library Quarterly

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