Support for academic teaching and research: University libraries in the 21st century.

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Abstract:

Libraries all over the world are facing major changes in the way service is provided to users. Academic libraries are among those who face the largest challenges, as teaching and research also change fundamentally. In this paper, the author shares experiences from an academic library in Bergen, Norway, in how the library can support research and teaching.

Norway, academic libraries, support for teaching, support for research, Bibsys

1. Introduction

The university library has as its mission to support the activities of the university it serves. This means supporting academic teaching, research and the dissemination of results to the larger academic and non-academic environment.

An important feature in the discussions about librarianship in the future, and especially about academic librarianship, where many of the issues within e-science and information management are likely to be experienced most acutely, is the extent to which academic librarians are able to make strategic decisions about the way forward by themselves and as they see fit - in cooperation with staff, or whether the academic institutions to which they belong will be making those decisions on their behalf. (Repanovici and Landøy 2012) In order for the libraries to be able to make the strategic decisions themselves, they need to have knowledge of what possibilities are in the future, what trends are coming internationally, and when a new trend is emerging – how to use the new possibilities within the local environment. It is also necessary to know what to stop doing, and when to seek strategic alliances inside and outside own institution.

However, now, the environment is changing so quickly that "it seems as if higher education has been stuck by a fast-moving tsunami filled with obstacles as well with potentials, a tsunami that is striking so forcefully and so quickly that often it is difficult to find safe ground for an

opportunity to reflect on what being in that storm of whirling ideas and concepts might mean for us in the future" (Kaufman 2012).

In the following, I will give some concrete examples of how a university library can fulfill their mission in an ever changing world, when the concepts of research and teaching also are changing.

2. Support for research

Support for research has been a traditional task of a university library, and will be so in the future also. But the concrete issues embedded in "support for research" has changed, and will continue to change as the research processes change. The concept of e-science, which includes huge amounts of data to be analysed by computers, also in the humanities, is changing both the topics and the methods of research.

2.1 Making the data available

The data for research will, as it always have, come in many different formats. For some subjects the data has been found in books, journals or databases, and the library has purchased the books and journals, and later also databases. In addition to the commercially compiled databases, there are databases with information from the government, with public statistics or parliamentary hearings, or databases with laws and judgments. There are corpora with large compilations of words or language expressions that can be searched and analysed. There are collections of digital resources – books (old and new), maps, pictures, music and other kinds. Historical and statistical data can be found on the internet.

In the same way as the library must make books and journals available, it must also make the different digital resources available to researchers. One major challenge is the different formats of the user interfaces, and the difficulties this can pose for researchers.

2.2 Making other research available

No research, no matter how basic or empiric based, exists in a vacuum. All research is based on and relates to other research. This is why the library also needs to make available the critical and influential voices of other scholars to the researchers at the own institution, and provide the possibility for a virtual meeting of great minds.

2.3 Making the output available

Finalizing the research process includes the dissemination of results to the scholarly community of one's peers both for criticism and as a building block for other researchers to continue with.

A special part of the dissemination process concerns the dissemination to the public and society at large, which needs a different vocabulary and different channels than scholarly dissemination.

2.4 University of Bergen library supports research

The University of Bergen library supports research in all the above. Necessary and important books, journals, databases and other material is purchased and made available. As much as possible, the material is made available through one interface, a discovery resource. The holdings are also indexed in Google Scholar, and thus made visible to the staff and students of the University. Close contact with scholars and information about their actual research projects is necessary when deciding what to purchase and how to prioritize the acquisition budget. "Patron driven acquisition" has also been tested in one of the libraries, with good results.

The library also runs the Bergen Open Research Archive, BORA, the institutional archive, where all researchers may upload their papers, and where master students can archive their theses. Almost all universities and colleges in Norway have some kind of institutional archive and most of them are also indexed in NORA, the Norwegian Open Research Archive and in Google Scholar. In Bergen, there is also support from the library for making Open Journals – journals with content that are freely available without subscription. One example of an open journal that also is edited by the library: The Nordic Journal of Information Literacy in Higher Education - https://noril.uib.no/index.php/noril.

3. Support for teaching

Traditionally, many university libraries have seen support for research as their main objective, but as long as the institution that the library serves also has high-class academic teaching in their mission, the library should be involved in this also. However, academic teaching at its best is research-based, so the library must either teach (or rather train) specialized courses in the use of library resources or in something where the library is already doing research, as is the example with information literacy. Of course support for teaching implies a lot more that doing the actual teaching itself, it also contains making study material available, and the same kind of resources that are offered to researchers.

3.1 University of Bergen library supports academic teaching

The enormous amount of texts and academic writings available at the internet seem to induce a new kind of plagiarism issues. When the first instances of plagiarism among the students were being rolled up, the University of Bergen Senate asked the library to build up an educational program for all new students, to train them in finding, evaluating, using and citing information

for their written works in an efficient and ethical way. The library also developed and runs a web-based module www.sokogskriv.no

In addition to making resources available for scholars, students will find books and journals available for study purposes. When it comes to the "required readings", there is a special project, involving the library and the student services, testing to determine whether the vast electronic holdings of the library could be of more use. The knowledge and utilization of the electronic recourses differ between the subjects, but there is potential for more use.

"Few libraries exist in a vacuum, accountable only to themselves. There is always a larger context for assessing library quality, that is, what and how well does the library contribute to achieving the overall goals of the parent constituencies?" (S. Pritchard 1996:572)

4. Tools, support and extra help
In many of these tasks here are need for and possibility for collaboration to support the library.

 "The potential and reality of collaboration cuts across the core responsibilities of academic libraries. (…), libraries must find new ways to work together in support of teaching and learning, and of research and scholarship." (Neal 2010:66)

Areas of collaboration between libraries can range from cataloguing; where several libraries collaborate in cataloguing in the same shared library catalogue. More than 100 larger and smaller Norwegian academic libraries collaborate this way in the library catalogue Bibsys, where the first library to buy a book will do the cataloguing, and then other libraries will add local data (shelf signatures etc). For Norwegian books, the first cataloguing is mainly done by the National Library. Internationally, the trend now is that catalogue data may be purchased from the vendors along with the books, but this has not been possible in Bibsys yet.

Electronic resource acquisitions and management are other areas where libraries can collaborate with good results. Libraries together can find better solutions and obtain better prices from the vendors. In Norway, there is a national consortium for academic electronic resources where the academic institution can subscribe to different subject areas and packages. The main goal is to get the best price possible.

Also, libraries can enter in development projects with other libraries. The projects can be of a wide range of areas, from two librarians writing a paper together to the multi-library collaboration that has led to the development of Søk and Skriv, or the national collaboration that eventually led to Bibsys. Also, public and academic libraries can seek collaboration in a local area in order to mainstream their services and reduce duplications.

A special kind of development project are the ones that are international; where Norwegian libraries, academic or public, with or without funding from the government, engage in

development projects in libraries in Africa or in less developed areas of Europe. University of Bergen Library has been involved over a decade with Makerere University Library in Uganda. From that collaboration development projects in Juba, South Sudan, has grown, currently there are funding possibilities for further projects there.

Supplementing collaborations with other libraries will be the very important collaboration with the academic staff at the university.

From Columbia University Library: "Effective faculty relationships are essential to the success of the academic library. Faculty as researchers are among the primary consumers of library collections and services. They also produce, as authors and editors, the scholarly literature that is acquired by the library. Their teaching activities and course requirements determine the nature and intensity of library use by students. Faculty members occupy positions of administrative and policy leadership, which influence the financial and political status of the library in the institution. Faculty members bring diverse but important priorities, interests, and expectations to their work at the university." (Neal 2010:70f)

And the academic library will be smart to exploit the resource that academic staff represents.

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